





SIDNEY: HER SENIOR YEAR

By ANNA CHAPIN RAY

THE TEDDY BOOKS

- I. Teddy : Her Book
- II. Phebe : Her Profession
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THE SIDNEY BOOKS

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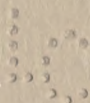
SIDNEY:
HER SENIOR YEAR

BY

ANNA CHAPIN RAY

AUTHOR OF "SIDNEY AT COLLEGE," "JANET AT ODDS,"
"TEDDY : HER BOOK," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS BY
HARRIET ROOSEVELT RICHARDS



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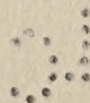
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TO THE PRESIDENT OF
SMITH COLLEGE
MARION LEROY BURTON

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SIDNEY: HER SENIOR YEAR

CHAPTER ONE

"MY de-ar girls!" The speaker flung herself into a chair and fanned herself with her hat, for she had been down town, and the September sun was warm. "Have you seen the dromedary?"

"The dromedary?" An answering voice detached itself from the chorus of babble which was focussing itself upon the proper hanging of the pictures.

"Yes, the dromedary. Nothing else expresses her."

"What is she? A freshman?"

The first speaker nodded with slow emphasis.

"She's Sidney Stayre's sister," she replied alliteratively. "Have any of you seen her?"

Amy Pope, mounted on a tall step-ladder, gave a chuckle whose quality was but barely tempered by her loyalty to the absent Sidney.

"Seen her?" she echoed then. "Of course I have, often."

"But you never told us."

"What was there to tell?" Amy queried demurely, as once more she faced back to the wall.

There was a little gasp of dissenting wonder that

any one, seeing Phyllis Stayre, could have the effrontery to ask the question. Then, —

“Everything!” came the comprehensive answer. “Everything, her height included. She’d dwarf the — the Flatiron Building, if she stopped beside it, and, even then, her feet and her hands and her nose have developed out of all proportion to the rest of her. Really, Amy, she is — ”

“Preposterously ugly,” Amy assented calmly. “There, girls, is that right? But about poor Phyllis: she’s not to blame for her looks.”

“Maybe not,” the other girl said viciously; “but she is to blame for her clothes.”

Amy turned around once more, and, coming down a step or two, seated herself to argue at her ease.

“Maybe, maybe,” she assented. “What did she have on, this time?”

“You speak as if she were a chronic problem, Amy,” another of the group interposed.

Amy waved aside the interruption.

“You haven’t seen Phyllis yet,” she said conclusively.

The first speaker took up the theme.

“Have on? Assorted fragments of all her different costumes, I should judge. Her blouse, from the look of it, was French convent work, the sort of thing we generally save for dinner-time. She wore it with a skirt that looked like withered denim, and she also had on hob-nailed shoes. Then she wears spectacles which appear to pinch her massive brow, for she has wound

the legs of them with some sort of black yarn, by way of pad, and her waist measure is — ”

“ Well? ” Amy urged her to her finishing touch.

The touch, when it came, proved to be anticlimax.

“ Just a little capacious,” the other girl said mildly, while she stuck the pins back into her hat, preparatory to rising and going on her way. “ Apparently Miss Phyllis, if that’s her name — she looks like a Maria — has theories of her own regarding costume.”

“ And apparently they don’t agree with yours,” Amy called after her retreating back. And then, with a little sigh, she added to herself, “ Poor old Sidney! It’s too bad.”

But another of the group had overheard the final comment, and cut in with an expression of her own belief.

“ It wouldn’t make any difference with Sidney’s stand, if she had a whole Noah’s ark full of sisters dressed in assorted party frocks and rubber boots. She’s Sidney Stayre, and that’s all that counts here. Do you suppose we’ll get her in for president? ”

Amy drove a tack with a vehemence which sent her left thumb into her mouth.

“ If — we — can — put — her — in,” she asserted, between caressing sucks. “ The Tyler and Haven girls are for her, solid, and all the invitation houses. Still, the Dickinson girls — ”

“ Their candidate is only Phi Kap,” some one interrupted. “ Sidney is Alpha.”

“Yes, and Biological, and Colloquium, and German: three clubs and a society. But the other girl is —”

“Bother the other girl!” Amy responded, with a vindictiveness in part due to her afflicted thumb, and with a phraseology which would have startled her lady mother, fortunately at home and out of hearing. “The best of the class is for Sidney, and we can count on the help of all the snobs who want to follow the winning side. That ought to give us a fairly solid majority. If it doesn’t, we’ll have to make the best of it, and put Sidney in as chairman of dramatics.”

“Do you think she’d make a good one?”

Amy shook her head.

“Not so good as she would president,” she made elliptical reply. “Still, she just has to be put in as something, even if we have to manufacture an office for her. All the course, she’s been one of the most prominent girls in the class, and she hasn’t had a decent office yet.”

“Just because we’ve been saving her for senior president,” came bluntly from across the room.

“Exactly.” Amy nodded at her thumb, which she was examining with anxious care. “It’s only that, now and then, one’s savings get swept away from them, and then —”

“Then?” the other girl queried.

Amy rose to her feet.

“Then there generally follows a most awful panic,” she made succinct reply. “However, I have no in-

tention yet awhile of getting panicky concerning Sidney."

"Too bad she's had such a sister land here," somebody else murmured sympathetically.

Again Amy shook her head. Again her reply was succinct.

"No monkey ever hurt the chances of any hand-organ; it's the quality of the instrument itself. Sidney is all right."

"Yes; only it's too bad, just now —" The speaker trailed off into indecisive pauses.

"It's too badder that she and Day wouldn't come over here with us," came another voice. "What do you suppose was the real reason, Amy?"

"Solid conscience, especially on Day's part," Amy told her.

"But they always said they'd go in for invitation houses. Don't you remember that night in freshman year?"

"That was theory, and a long way ahead. When it came to the point, Day balked, and Sidney couldn't be coaxed or bullied into leaving her, so they both stayed on the campus. Of course, there's something to be said on their side. It's a little hard on the college to have all the best seniors going off the campus, and it throws too much responsibility on the best of the juniors. Still, I wish that Day had been a little less endowed with conscience. I had counted on her being over here with all the rest of us."

"Perhaps she didn't want to come."

Amy frowned. The suggestion, a little too pertly accented for her liking, had come from the girl who had been chosen to fill Day's vacant place.

"As it happens, I know for a fact that she did," she answered quietly. "With Day Argyle, though, the what she wants isn't always the final consideration."

The girl who had spoken from across the room shook her head gloomily at the sofa pillow she was covering.

"There's one thing about it," she observed; "it's bound to make a good deal more difference to us than it will to Day and Sidney."

Day and Sidney, meanwhile, were anything but gloomy, while they settled their belongings in one of the largest, sunniest rooms of the Tyler House. True, as Amy had said, only a stern and conscientious sense of duty to the college as a whole had kept them from going to join a dozen of their closest friends and cronies in the invitation house a few doors down the street, a sense of duty argued out by Day in various discussions with her brother, who brought to bear upon the question all the logic that had come with Harvard seniorhood. Day Argyle's conscience, coupled with Rob Argyle's logic, had brought the matter to a swift reversal of Day's earlier plan. As gently as she was able, midway in her junior year, Day had broken the news of her decision to her roommate, Sidney Stayre; had mentioned to Sidney that, she herself staying on the campus, Sidney would better plan to room with Amy Pope.

To Day's intense surprise, Sidney mutinied promptly

and flatly. It was a fact that she had liked the invitation house idea, had looked forward to the good times their little set would have, quite by themselves and with the matron of their choice. Nevertheless, without discussion of any sort, Sidney had refused to room with any one but Day Argyle; and, her refusal once phrased, she departed on her heels to acquaint the Registrar with their combined decision. In consequence, there was wailing among their especial friends; but the wiser heads among the faculty rejoiced, for Day Argyle and Sidney Stayre, steady and sane and gloriously human, were good to hold on the campus. As for Sidney and Day, their stand once taken and publicly announced, they ceased to waste much thought upon the matter.

It was now a long four years since the September afternoon when Sidney Stayre and Day Argyle had met, and, meeting, had sworn a friendship which bade fair to be perennial. Their New York homes were barely half a mile apart, yet their acquaintance had achieved itself by devious and round-about ways. Sidney Stayre, spending a summer in the Côte de Beaupré, had become good friends with a Quebec family of Leslies. Six months later, when Mr. Leslie's death had revealed the bareness of the family treasury, Mrs. Leslie had sought to make both ends meet by taking boarders, and the boarders had been the Argyles. Rob Argyle had been semi-invalided, just then, convalescent from a football injury to his knee. Accordingly, it had come to pass, when his doctor ordered him back to

New York for special treatment, that the younger Leslies had seen to it that he should meet their good friend, Sidney Stayre. Rob and Sidney had liked each other from the start, regardless of the fact that Rob was the pampered son of fortune, Sidney the daughter of a home where brains were more plentiful than dollars, or even dimes. Day, however, had had her reservations, had even held back from a suggested meeting. In the end, she had yielded only because she always did yield to every whim of her jovial older brother. She had packed up all her reservations into a bundle and taken them with her, when at last she had gone for her first call on Sidney. In the course of the call, however, she had lost her bundle, and, in the weeks and months to come, she never had been able to find it again. In her judgment, Sidney Stayre was of too large a nature to be judged by the question of whether she did or did not possess certain things that Day, up to that time, had regarded as essentials. She was herself. Being herself, she needed nothing more.

Early in their first year at college, Day's mother had tried to play the fairy godmother to Sidney, just a little and only now and then. She had been afraid that the other girls in the class would be less clear-sighted than her own young daughter; that, in a crowd of strangers, struggling all for recognition of one sort or another, Sidney might be judged less by what she was than by what she did not have. Mrs. Argyle's efforts, however, had been wholly needless. Sidney, to be sure, had accepted her gifts with a simple gratitude that had been

both sensible and generous. None the less, with or without the gifts, Sidney's career would have been just the same. Downright as a boy, full of fun, full, too, of kindly sympathy for every one about her, capable of a loyalty that would endure through thick and thin, endure to the very death, Sidney Stayre was as sure to make new friends as she was to hold her old ones.

And Day was loyal and downright, too, albeit quicker of temper and of speech, more vehement in all her moods, and totally unspoiled by her life of only daughter in a luxurious and adoring home. If any one had sought to belittle Day in Sidney's eyes, that one would have been slowly crushed to death beneath the withering weight of Sidney's scornful dignity; but any one maligning Sidney in Day's hearing would have been swiftly scorched by Day's hot wrath. To each other, they were fast becoming all in all; and yet each one did her level best to keep room in her life for a round dozen of other, lesser friends. Nevertheless, their best times of all were when they were quite alone together, or else with Day's only brother, Rob.

Chief among these other, lesser girl friends was Amy Pope, who had just confessed to knowing Phyllis Stayre. Another of them was Janet Leslie, and Janet now sat enthroned, Turkwise, on the bed, and offered sage advice about the placing of the desks and tea-table.

"Of course," she said, with a scanty regard for the feelings of her companions; "if you were grinds, or even just plain students, your desks would be the main thing to consider. As it is, though, I'd give that place

to the table. It's the greatest good of the greatest number that you're after, and you'll have ten girls in to eat things to every thirster after knowledge."

Sidney laughed.

"I prefer my knowledge to be diluted with tea; I always did," she confessed. "It's no use, Janet; I am afraid I don't take my work enough in earnest."

"You don't have to," Janet responded flatly. "Things come to you, without your half trying for them; to Day, too. I have to dig for what I get."

"What matter, as long as you get it, dearie?" Day queried, as she cast aside the books she was sorting and went to rest with Janet on the bed.

"Matter!" Janet echoed grimly. "Nothing; only that the class labels me a grind, and passes me by on the other side."

"There are worse things than a grind," Day said consolingly.

"Yes, and better. There's nothing more deadly, though. I'm willing to grind, nine tenths of the time. The other tenth, I'd like to kick my heels and frivol with the rest of you; but nobody seems to think it possible I have any latent tendencies towards skittishness," Janet grumbled, scowling at her interlocked fingers.

"How do you want to skit?" Sidney demanded briefly, above the clatter of the cups she was unpacking.

"I don't know. I wish I did," Janet confessed, still moodily. "That's the very worst of the whole situation. I have a vague hankering for frivolity in

general; but there's no one thing I care about, besides tennis and the banjo club. After all, I sometimes think I enjoy my work about as much as anything I've ever done, except — ”

“ Except what, Janet? ” Day asked, her eyes upon her companion's intent face.

Janet looked up, met her eyes, blushed hotly. Then —

“ Do you remember the first day I did Madame Champlain? ” she asked crisply. “ That was the very best day for me of all the pageants,” she caught her breath; “ almost of all my life.”

Sidney looked up from her pink and green china cups.

“ Janet,” she asked abruptly; “ why don't you go in for dramatics? ”

“ Me! Hh! ” Janet answered. Then she changed the subject.

It was a little while before Sidney spoke again, and it was plain that, during her silence, her mind was not wholly upon her cups.

“ Amy says they have read everything from early Hindu to the works of Mr. Bacon-Shakespeare,” she observed. “ I shall be glad, when it is all settled.”

“ When will be the meeting? ”

“ As soon as they stop fighting over presidential candidates,” Sidney made answer, with a fine unconsciousness of the identity of one of those same candidates. “ They ought to settle that, this next week, and take the play, the week after.”

“ I hope they give *Midsummer Night's Dream*,” Day remarked, from her corner of the bed.

"Oh, why? I don't," Sidney opposed her.

"Because I yearn to see myself as *Bottom*," Day yawned. "That seems to me a grand climax for one's college course."

"I always felt a mad desire to be a ghost," Sidney retorted. "All you have to do is to stalk about and then fade away again. That reminds me, Janet, have you been up to see your mother, this morning?"

"Yes, early."

"See anything of my small sister?"

Janet laughed.

"No. I heard her, though."

Sidney's eyes betrayed a passing uneasiness as to what lay back of Janet's laughter.

"What was she doing?"

"I am not sure. I thought it wasn't wise to go in, so, like your ghost, I just stalked about and faded away again. She seemed to be engaged in elemental strife with her trunk and a chair or two. However, those old houses are solidly built," Janet added reassuringly.

"If a chair was all. But what about the roommate?"

"That remains to be seen."

"Hasn't she come yet?"

Janet shook her head.

"Not until this afternoon."

Sidney gave a little sigh.

"Oh, dear!" she said. "I do wish I knew how she and Phyllis were going to get along together."

CHAPTER TWO

THERE were others who shared Sidney's wonder, not the least curious among whom was Mrs. Leslie, Janet's mother.

Mrs. Leslie's Canadian life, together with the past three years in Northampton, years which had sufficed to build up her household of girls into the most popular and potent freshman colony in all Smith College, not all of Mrs. Leslie's past experience had given her any standards whereby to judge a girl like Phyllis Stayre. If the poker had a hot end, Phyllis promptly grasped it. If Phyllis could deny herself any of the gentler graces, the denial came with strenuous insistence. If there were ever a totally unpopular side to any question, with unerring instinct Phyllis chose it as her own, alternately hugging its corners to her heart, and brandishing it aloft in sign of battle. Like royalty itself, her lions were always rampant, generally rambustious and occasionally rampaging. She spelt honour and duty in the largest capitals, and omitted graciousness from her vocabulary entirely. Any showing of affection she deemed beneath her dignity. She went her way in lofty isolation, outwardly disdainful, inwardly craving in vain the affection that none dared offer her; none, that is, save her father and her grown-up cousin,

Wade Winthrop. As for her sister Sidney, Phyllis was never able to decide whether her own attitude was of affection, envy, or of total disapproval. Sidney had all the qualities denied herself, she knew. None the less, Phyllis had a smug belief that she herself would never have been content to slide along through life with one-tenth of her sister's irresponsibility, and she gave audible expression to her regrets that Sidney paid so little heed to the effect of her example on the world about her.

In personal appearance, Phyllis was just as Amy Pope's companion had described her, only a good deal more so. Long since, she had outgrown the physical dimensions of her parents, and still she was shooting upward with a tireless energy. Her long, lanky body was loosely strung together, and her arms and legs seemed swinging off at odd angles, with a curious tendency to get themselves in her way at inconvenient moments. Her hands were knuckly, and her feet were flat. For the rest, her hair was brown and as lank as her body; her nose was long, and her spectacled eyes were pale blue and prominent. Her sole redeeming feature was her sensitive mouth with its hard, even teeth, and even that was injured by its customary look of disdainful discontent.

Nature assuredly had been in a malign mood, when Phyllis Stayre was created. To make the matter worse, she had been endowed with an inborn craving for the beautiful, a longing to achieve it in her person and surroundings; while she had been denied all knowledge that beautiful things about one may not, of necessity,

be harmful to one's moral sense. Phyllis undeniably was ugly. Still, she might have made herself more comely, had she not taken it as a creed that the beauty of intellect, however mediocre, rendered needless any other sort of charm. Once only and for a few months, she had wavered from her gospel of ugliness. She had fluffed out her lanky hair and hunted for becoming colours for her frocks. While the epoch lasted, she was a changed and gracious Phyllis. Then she had cast the effort from her, and returned to her grim and unadorned severity.

Whether she had been antagonized by some careless comment; whether she had simply become disheartened by her increasing length and boniness: this remained a mystery to all her friends. Phyllis vouchsafed no explanation to any one. She merely resumed her old habit of dragging her lank hair backward into a tight, hard knob, of robing herself in colours whose durability in no way atoned for their exceeding ugliness, of denying herself the softening bits of finery that all girls love to wear. She was always spotless, always trim, always and always presented the appearance of being tightly girt for some sanctified and grimy undertaking. And now Phyllis Stayre, with all her mental and physical and unæsthetic angles, was about to be plunged into a household of fluffy, frilly, gay young girls, gathered from some of the most luxurious homes the country can show. Small wonder that Sidney, three years her senior, both in college and in life, should feel and express some alarm as to the result.

It had been by no means a matter of course that Phyllis went to Smith College.

With Sidney, it had been a fact established in the mind of Mr. Stayre upon the night when he had been allowed to tiptoe across the dim-lit room and peer down at the red and squirming person of his oldest child. However, Stayres were many in the home, and ducats few. The income of an assistant editor could not be expected to send them all to college; and Phyllis, who of them all would have cared for it the most, had not the ingratiating tricks which would have coaxed a higher education out of a hesitating parent. Sidney, they all agreed, was making splendid use of all her chances, was developing into the all-round woman on whom the college tradition had set the seal of its approval. In the steady discipline of work and play, of training by her mates as well as of instruction by the faculty, Sidney's weak points were becoming strong, her strong points stronger.

All this time, Phyllis was sitting, a silent listener at the family conferences, trying as best she could to down her envy at the praise of Sidney, trying still more to hold in check her smug consciousness that, given the chance, she would do better a good deal than Sidney had ever done, that she would turn her back on spreads and dinners down at Boyden's, on outdoor sports and indoor frolics, and cause herself to be talked over by the faculty, an ornament to all the classrooms, a living sample package of all the things a college really stood for. She even lay awake at night to picture

herself, always with smoothly parted hair and uncompromising sleeves and skirts, marching forward, amid the echoing plaudits of her class, to receive her diploma from the hand of a smiling president, whose unoccupied hand would rest upon her shoulder in wordless benediction. Usually, at this point, Phyllis arose and sought her handkerchief. Usually, too, the upsetting of stray articles encountered in the dark followed by way of anticlimax.

And now Phyllis Stayre, hugging her theories and her ambitions, sternly desirous of reforming the flip-pant tone of college life, of providing new records for student emulation, above all, of being a torch of duty in the merry path of her senior sister: Phyllis had arrived upon the scene of all her dreams and fancies. The matter had been achieved by Wade Winthrop, the cousin whom Phyllis adored. Wade was a man of thirty, rich, talented and, above all else, human. Years earlier, he had been the first one to see in Phyllis the germs of something other than the family termagant she seemed. Seeing them, he was keen enough to realize that a family of critical, teasing young brothers and sisters was by no means the best soil to promote their growth. Family tradition had it that Phyllis was the odd one, and cranky. It was time, then, that Phyllis should be removed from the influence of the family tradition. Moreover, as Wade was just about to marry a product of Smith College, he was quite naturally convinced that Smith College was the best place in the world for any girl, for even Phyllis. Mr. Stayre,

after a futile demurring at so great a favour, had ended by accepting Wade's generosity, more because he had no notion whatsoever what else to do with Phyllis than for any other reason.

Mrs. Argyle had flung herself into the plan, heart and soul. It was she who had coaxed Mrs. Leslie into taking the crabbed and ungainly girl into her carefully chosen household; it was she who had eked out Phyllis's slender wardrobe with the pretty, dainty trifles which Phyllis disdained as frivolous and wore at all sorts of mismatched hours and angles. It was she who had laid upon her own young daughter the final charge that she should see to it that Phyllis did not have too bad a time, a charge which Day accepted with an outward meekness and an inward surety of her own futility.

Phyllis's inevitable mutiny against the established order of things began the night before she left home.

"What in the world is the sense in going so early?" she demanded of Sidney. "College doesn't open till Thursday."

Sidney looked up from her trunk.

"Because — Why, the girls all do," she answered.

Phyllis sat down on the corner of her own trunk and prepared to argue out the matter.

"What a habit you have of that, Sidney!" she began, in a tone of elderly patience.

Sidney continued to stuff tissue paper into the sleeves of her best winter frock.

"Habit of what?" she queried absently.

"Habit of taking what other people do, as your own standard, without seeking to find out why they do it," Phyllis argued, still patiently.

Sidney laughed.

"Why not? The mere fact that they do it shows that it is probably the simplest thing to do."

After an old, old trick of hers, Phyllis smoothed back her hair with the flat of her two hands. The gesture did not in the least improve her comeliness; but it gave her the comforting sense of being in order for the fray.

"Not at all," she said then. "Customs are like — like sheep tracks across a country pasture."

"Bravissimo, Phil! Encore! Encore a whole lot of times!" And a clapping of hands capped the words.

Phyllis turned her head, to see a great blond boy, jovial, tall, wide-shouldered and limping slightly, come strolling into the downstairs room which, in deference to a winding stairway and the tempers of the porters, Phyllis had ordained for the packing of the go-to-college trunks.

"Oh, it's you!" she said, and her tone was not exuberant in its cordiality.

Sidney, however, hailed the guest with manifest delight.

"Just in time to sit on my trunk, Rob!" she told him. "I was wondering how I could get the cover down."

"I weigh one hundred and ninety-one and a sixth,

and I am all at your service. But, I say, do you generally do your packing in the front parlour?" he inquired, as he seated himself in the nearest unencumbered chair. "With Day, it's a secret rite. Neither Jack nor I are admitted to a view of what goes on, when she's packing."

"How is Day?"

"How should I know? She shut herself in, this noon, and she hasn't been seen since. That's why I am here, you see."

"Thank you," Sidney told him courteously.

"Don't mention it. But do keep still, and give Phil a chance to go at it again. Go it, Phil. The sheep trail was a beauty. What next? Hens; or a lighthouse on a lonesome rock?"

"Neither." Phyllis, her head in her trunk, spoke briefly.

Rob Argyle stretched out his long person quite at his ease, and clasped his hands behind his yellow head. His whole attitude betokened, not only his intention of remaining, but his good right to be there in the first place.

"What called forth the glorious outburst?" he demanded then.

Sidney laughed.

"Phyllis was trying to arouse me to break down the custom of going back to Smith, a day early," she explained.

"What's the use?" Rob queried.

Phyllis took her head out of the trunk and spoke.

"That is just what I was telling Sidney," she proclaimed.

Rob waved his hand, as if to dismiss her words.

"No," he corrected. "I mean what's the use of not use-ing. Why not go?"

"Why waste the time?" Phyllis demanded in her turn, and her accent was that of conscious superiority.

"It isn't wasted," Sidney defended herself. "It takes a little time to get one's room in order."

"How much time does it need, I'd like to know, to take things out of a trunk and hang them in the closet?" Phyllis quite forgot Rob, as she hurled the question at her sister.

It was Rob, however, who gave the answer.

"Lots. You have to rest between layers, you know. And then there are the pictures, and the cushions for the window-seat," he argued tranquilly.

"Don't expect to have any," Phyllis responded briefly.

"Oh, but you'll need them. Else, what will you have to lie on and look up at?"

Phyllis shut down the cover of her trunk with a bang.

"I expect to lie in bed at night. The rest of the time, I shall sit up, not sprawl; and my books will give me all I need to look at," she announced, with what she meant to be a crushing emphasis.

"The land! You don't say so!" Rob's eyes belied his accent. Then he asked meekly, "Shall I sit on a corner of it, Phil?"

"Thanks, no. I usually do things for myself," she

answered, with the light of battle in her eyes, and Rob thought best to change the subject.

However, being Rob Argyle, he could not well keep from teasing, and now he recurred to his former query.

"I say, Sidney, how long since packing has become a drawing-room accomplishment?" he asked her.

To his exceeding discomfiture, it was Phyllis who answered, and her answer assured him that he was still in disgrace.

"I always mean to see to it that the trunks are brought downstairs to be packed," she made truculent rejoinder. "It is kinder to the men who come for them; and, besides, we," the emphasis on the pronoun was invidious; "we can't afford to have our front-stairs paper all knocked off the walls. The last time Sidney's trunk came home, it took me all the next morning to patch the places where the corners had gouged in. However, Sidney's trunk is very heavy. I don't care to cram mine full of senseless gewgaws."

Rob whistled. Then, —

"You may change your tune, when you face the proposition of college furniture and four empty walls," he suggested good-naturedly.

"I consider empty spaces restful; and I shall have too much else to do, anyway, to spend my time dusting useless ornaments."

"Mayhap. Your roommate may be otherwise minded, however," he warned her.

"My roommate is welcome to do as she likes, on her own side of the room." Phyllis rose as curtly as

she spoke. "Good night. I am tired, and I think I'll go to bed. Be sure you put out the light in the hall, when Rob goes, Sidney."

"Also the cat," Rob made incorrigibly flippant addition. Then, as he sat gazing after Phyllis's retreating back, his jolly blue eyes clouded. "Do you know, Sidney," he said at length; "I find it in my heart of hearts to wish that Wade had chosen some other place for Phyllis, or else had waited over till another year. You aren't likely to spend this next year on a bed of roses, methinks; and, when it's a case of Phil, me generally thinks a good deal to the purpose."

"Yes." Sidney's voice was thoughtful, as she rose and led the way to the shabby, comfortable library where Rob loved best to spend his leisure evenings. "And yet, Rob, I'm not sure you are always fair to Phil."

"Is she to me?" Rob made unexpected question, as he followed at her side.

On the threshold of the book-crammed, homelike room, Sidney halted and looked her companion straight in the eyes.

"No," she answered frankly; "she isn't. She's not fair to you in the least. There's this difference between you, though. You don't care a snap, a single snap; and Phyllis does. Under all her crankiness, she wants to have people care for her, and it almost breaks her heart that more of them don't."

"Why doesn't she go about making them, then?" Rob asked cheerily, his eyes on the tall girl beside him.

Sidney shook her head.

"I begin to be afraid it isn't in her," she said, with a little accent of despair.

"Honestly, Sidney, does she ever try?"

Sidney hesitated. Then loyalty to her sister triumphed over absolute truth.

"I think she does."

"Mighty curious ways she has of showing it, then!" Rob observed, as, crossing the floor, he drew up a chair for Sidney and then flung himself down into an aged Morris chair whose stuffing oozed at every seam. "I used to think she did, once on a time. Four years ago, the time that Jack was burned, she had an interval of comparative meekness. Now — And as for college, Sidney, I honestly am afraid you're up against it."

"Not so much as you'd think. Phil will go her own way; all the more so because she has always proclaimed it as her theory that Day and I are unduly frivolous. Besides, we are in another house and at the farthest end of the campus. Phil never has had the habit of dropping in upon her friends."

"Be thanked!" Rob observed piously. "But what about the roommate?"

Sidney's loyalty vanished in her chuckle of pure fun.

"Rob," she said, bending forward and speaking low; "we haven't dared tell Phyllis yet; but, at the last minute, the quiet, earnest, purposeful roommate that Mrs. Leslie had chosen for her, has decided to go to Radcliffe. Of course, the only thing to do, was to fill in from the waiting list, and the next in line is a

Chicago girl, rich as Croesus, related to all sorts of famous people, a mere youngster who is only sent to college for a year or so, to keep her out of society a little longer. Won't they make a glorious combination?"

Rob whistled softly to himself. Then he echoed Sidney's chuckle. Then, —

"Me also thinks the roommate will be up against it," he murmured to himself.

Forty-eight hours later, the roommate shared Rob Argyle's belief. In the warm middle of a sultry afternoon, an afternoon when the heat waves danced across the meadows and chased each other up Mount Tom's rugged face, she had shaken herself free from the dust and wrinkles of her tiresome journey, and given a little sigh of satisfaction when she found herself beneath, not the curved roof of a stuffy sleeper, but of a double rank of arching elms. The satisfaction increased, as her carriage drew up before a fine old colonial mansion, and she saw Mrs. Leslie, dainty and smiling, waiting to greet her on the threshold. In that instant, college ceased to be a bugaboo and became a gracious social fact. With Western cordiality, she saw no need to hide her pleasure beneath a mask of chill indifference. Instead, she flung an arm around Mrs. Leslie's slim waist and kissed her cheek with frank effusion. Then, still clinging to Mrs. Leslie's hand, she mounted the old white staircase, ready to bestow the same degree of cordiality upon her waiting roommate.

However —

At a door near the top of the staircase, Mrs. Leslie halted.

“Come!” a voice said, with a brevity which sounded hostile to the ears outside.

Mrs. Leslie stepped aside. The door flew open with a jerk. Then both Mrs. Leslie and her companion gasped, the one at sight of Phyllis, the other at the transformation in the erstwhile pretty room.

Phyllis was in her normally abnormal array; but face and hands and hair bore witness to a season of strenuous manual toil, so it was no wonder that her roommate elect gasped at the sight of what appeared before her. Mrs. Leslie’s gasp was quite as accountable. From end to end of the great, airy room, an imaginary line seemed to have been traced. Ranged on either side of the line, planted with logical reference to door and window, but without the slightest evidence of taste or comfort or anything else but mathematical precision: ranged on either side of the room were a bed, a desk, a chair, a chiffonier and a screen. Exactly in the middle of the floor, astride of the imaginary line, stood the one table that the room afforded, the one Morris chair. Both sides were equally bare of the dainty fripperies in which college girls delight; and the only clue to the edge which Phyllis had chosen to inhabit lay in the prim row of books above the nearer desk.

The other girl stood, for a moment of blank silence, gazing from Phyllis’s self to Phyllis’s waiting room, then back to Phyllis and thence down across her fluffy

little self. The next instant, to the intense discomfiture of Phyllis, she had burst into a fit of delighted laughter while, her hand extended, she bore down on Phyllis.

"Oh, how do you do?" she gasped, through her merriment. "I'm Marguerite Veronica Terry, and I suppose you are my roommate. Aren't you the funniest thing that ever lived!" Then she stood aside, to let the man bring in her trunk. "You'd better put it down in front of that desk, the one with the books on top of it," she ordered nonchalantly. "We'll have to pack them in as well as we can, you see, for there are three more outside." And, taking off her long gray gloves, she tossed them, one inside out, on top of the afore-mentioned books.

Two hours later, when Phyllis and Marguerite Veronica came down, not side by side, to supper, an eye far less keen than that of Mrs. Leslie might have discovered that both the girls appeared considerably chastened.

CHAPTER THREE

A UDIBLY and aloud, Day Argyle was making her unregenerate moan to Janet Leslie.

"It's a fearful thing, Janet, to have the double handicap of Scotch Covenanter ancestors and a New England conscience," she lamented.

Janet, in her freshman year, had formed the unbreakable habit of spending a good half of her time in the room of Day and Sidney. Now she looked up from the essay she was copying at Day's desk.

"How does it take you?" she inquired unfeelingly.

"It grips my higher nature with the tongs of Duty," Day responded.

"That sounds rather like a freshman's effort to get notice in English Thirteen," Janet made caustic comment. "Do be concrete, Day, and tell me what ails you; or else keep still entirely."

"Phyllis ails me."

Janet tranquilly laid aside a finished page and took a fresh one.

"That's nothing," she answered. "She ails us all."

"Perhaps. Still, your mother hasn't laid her off on you, as your own especial charge."

Janet laughed.

"No; I only imagine she'd like to, now and then."

The combined problem of Marguerite Veronica and Phyllis is no small one. Have you heard the latest: that Marguerite Veronica insists on kissing Phil good night and good morning, every single day? "

"She must be plucky. I'd as soon embrace a hedgehog. Imagine Phil allowing herself to be kissed! Who told you? Your mother? "

"No. Mother never tells me things about the girls. Marguerite Veronica was confiding her trials to a sympathetic friend, and the friend leaked. I can't say I blame her. The idea of Phyllis under such conditions is too good to be lost."

"Poor Sidney!" Day said inconsequently. And then she added, "And poor me! "

"Why poor you? "

"Because it's borne in on me that I ought to take Phil to the sophomore reception."

"Why in the world should you do that? "

Day's answer came flatly.

"Because no one else will be misguided enough to do it, if I don't."

But Janet's answer betrayed her greater amount of worldly wisdom.

"Day, you mole! Why can't you see things as they are? Don't you realize that, after yesterday's election, Phyllis Stayre will be in a position to refuse more invitations than Sidney, when she was a freshman, ever thought of having? If Phyllis were ten times the behemoth that she is, as the sister of the senior president, she would never be left to sit it out alone."

Day attacked a side issue.

"She isn't altogether a behemoth, Janet."

Janet sniffed, while she picked a bit of lint from the point of her pen.

"Precious near," she contradicted.

"Exactly; but not quite. The margin makes all the trouble. Without it, one would feel quite justified in leaving her to go her ways. Meanwhile, are you going to the sophomore reception?"

"Not if I can help myself."

"You can't; not in human decency, with all that mob of freshmen to be looked out for. Come along with me, now. I'll ask Phil, and you can take Marguerite Veronica. Then, if any skeletons stalk forth, we can combine to hold them inside the family limits."

"But I don't want to go," Janet protested. "I hate such crowds; one can't dance, only just hop up and down. Besides, seniors ought to be immune from baby things like that. And, besides, I want to rest up, so that I can enjoy myself, next day."

"Fudge!" And then a naughty light came into Day's brown eyes. "If you don't go," she threatened; "I'll ask Phil to go off with us, Mountain Day. Then where'll you be?"

"At home," Janet told her tersely. Then she cast her essay, inky and incomplete, inside the desk. "Come along, you tyrant," she added, as she rose. "This sort of thing is nothing but a species of moral hold-up; but, if it's a question between the sophomore reception and having Phil go with us, Mountain Day, I'll choose

the lesser ill, and clinch it as soon as possible. Has Amy's mother come?"

"Not yet. She'll get here in time, though. What a shame your mother can't go with us, too!"

"She'd love it; but she's like her daughter, a victim to a sense of duty. Do come on, Day, if you're coming. I could have finished up a dozen essays, while you dawdle." And Janet caught her friend by the arm and marched her down the stairs and out across the sunny campus, already dappled with the falling leaves.

Sidney, meanwhile, was over in Amy Pope's room, seated in the place of honour, with a congratulatory group huddled about her knees, all of them talking at once and nobody listening to anybody else at all, while they recounted the glorious details of the class election, only the day before.

"It was what they call a sweeping victory," one of them proclaimed at length; "so sweeping that it didn't leave much dust behind."

"And yet, I am rather sorry for the other girl," Sidney remarked thoughtfully.

"Sorry! Sidney Stayre, didn't you want to get elected senior president?" the other demanded sternly.

"Helen Pope, I wanted it like mad," Sidney confessed, and her voice sounded a little shamefaced over her own confession. "That's the very reason I know how it must hurt to be defeated."

"But she had no reason to expect any thing else," Helen objected.

"Neither had I," Sidney made prompt retort.

"Oh!" Helen closed the subject with the monosyllable much as she might have driven a cork into a bottle.

Her roommate, Margaret Welch, took up a new division of the selfsame theme, for, in those early days of the opening fall term, no group of seniors could be long together without discussing matters of class politics.

"Anyway, I am glad the victory has swept," she commented. "Now, next thing, we want to do another sweeping, when we go about the play. Sidney, have you any special ideas that you would have urged on us, if the presidency hadn't tied your hands?"

"Tongue, you mean," Sidney corrected her. "No; at least none that I can hand on to you. The preliminary committee knows more about it than I do."

"Doubted," Amy Pope put in.

"Then you must have been an inefficient chairman," Sidney retorted, laughing. "It's not my business to go about, all summer, reading plays."

Amy shrugged her shoulders.

"I left that to the others," she said calmly. "For my share, I felt that it was enough to go up to Quebec and toil through all those Tercentenary pageants."

"Toil!" her sister echoed. "When we all were envying you with all our might and main. I even wrote, offering myself as understudy; but Amy assured me that she only did it from a sense of duty to the class, and that a sense of duty would carry her through it, even to the very end. But truly, Sidney, you must have

had some choice, and I'd be glad to act as mouthpiece for your opinions, which probably are a good deal better than any of my own."

But Sidney shook her head.

"Better not, Helen; thank you just the same."

"Why not?"

"We don't want the meeting to look too much as if it were cut and dried beforehand."

"It always is, though," Helen protested.

"Yes, in a way. But," Sidney straightened up in her chair; "we girls want to look out a little, or it will be said that our set is going to run things for the whole class."

"Why not?" Margaret Welch objected. "You know perfectly well that, except for you and Day, this house has all the nicest girls."

"We think we have, that is," Amy Pope corrected bluntly. "Of course, there are always a few nice people who haven't been discovered until senior year. Some of them may be turning up, any day."

"Then we'll annex them," Helen made prompt answer.

Her sister's retort was just as prompt.

"They may not care to be annexed. What are you saying, Margaret?"

"Merely that they will be the exceptions that prove the rule. But now see here, Amy, there's no use in being too humble concerning ourselves. Leaving out Sidney and Day who really belong to the crowd, this house has more celebrities, girls who really and

truly have done things for the college and the class, than any other house in town. It's largely a matter of chance. Fate dropped us down in a bundle, freshman year, at Mother Leslie's, and we have stayed in our bundle ever since, even if we did scatter into every house the campus holds. It was foreordained that we should come together, this last year; and I can't see any harm in our going on planning things for the class, just as we always have done, even if we do happen to be together in one house."

It was not easy to answer Helen's argument, off-hand. Sidney prudently shifted her ground a little.

"But the rest of the class are bound to get jealous."

"Let them."

"Once they get jealous, they'll proceed to balk." It was the basket ball captain who spoke, and her words carried the more weight, as every one present was quite well aware that they were ground out of long and hard experiences of just such balking. Prowess in basket ball does not, of necessity, depend upon the gentler moral graces.

But Sidney was sitting forward in her chair, her chin on her cupped palms, her eyes upon the floor.

"This is the way I look at it, girls," she said. "As it happens, our own little set has held together, all through college. We think alike about most things; we want the class to stand for just about the same ideals. Moreover, as it also happens, we've held a majority of the most important class offices. For that very reason, we're bound to get ourselves called a ring — we

had a little taste of that, in freshman year — and to get our plans opposed, just because they happen to be our plans. Of course, we honestly think they are the best plans, all things considered, for the class. That is no reason, though, we shouldn't give the other girls a chance to bring their own plans out for discussion. If ours are good for anything, they'll stand comparison. If not, we'd better drop them. Myself, I believe in them enough to wish we could bring them out without much arrangement beforehand, just trundle them out before the class and leave them to stand there on their own merits. I honestly think it would be the fairest thing to do."

"But the others will have their scheme all cut and dried. Probably it's all planned out already just which girl will argue what," Helen said gloomily.

Quite unexpectedly to them all, her sister came to the support of Sidney.

"I believe that the class has sufficient inborn common sense to see fair play," she proclaimed.

"So do I, granted time enough," Helen answered quickly. "However, given the narrow limits of one class meeting, I prefer party organization."

"But not boss rule," Sidney added. "Don't be too optimistic, though, Helen. The question of the play has never yet been decided on in any one class meeting."

"We have broken a few other precedents," Helen retorted. "I see no reason we shouldn't pulverize this one, too."

"Your theories are beauteous, Sidney." The com-

ment came from another of the group, a silent listener up till now. "However, to step from theory to chill fact, who is your choice for chairman of dramatics?"

"Amy Pope," Sidney made prompt reply.

"Me? I? Why for?" The candidate bounced about to face Sidney, cutting off in its midst the low-voiced argument she had been holding with Margaret Welch.

"Because — But do you really want to know? You may not feel flattered," Sidney warned her.

"Go on, and get it over," Amy urged. "It's better to hear such things said to your face than to have them come snailing up your backbone at unlikely moments."

"You'd better try for Ivy Oration, Amy," her sister advised her. "Such wealth of metaphor ought not to be wasted."

But Amy turned a deaf ear on her sister.

"Why me? Out with it!" she adjured Sidney.

Sidney laughed. Then she emptied out the bundle of her opinions with the frankness of a well-trying friend.

"Because you have about as much feeling as a feather-bed. Because you always have a charming knack of getting your own way, by fair means or foul, by bullying or by blarney; and, what's worse, you look so delighted over getting it that nobody has the heart to tell you what a wretch you've been. Then you have a little common sense, a good deal of bulldog courage and the habit of keeping any amount of little lists of things that you want to remember."

"Anything else?" Amy queried, breaking in upon

the mirth which had followed Sidney's remarkable finale.

"Yes. No conscience, and the inestimable advantage of having a summer's coaching by Lascelles, and of seeing him manage a perfect caravan of actors."

"And suppose I won't?" Amy asked her.

"Then Janet Leslie, of course," some one suggested. Sidney vetoed the suggestion.

"Not Janet, of all people," she said quickly.

"Why not? She's good in dramatics."

"Precisely. Therefore we can't afford to waste her on the management. Never mind now, Amy. Your thanks will keep over, till we have more time. Besides that, Janet would have the whole cast by the ears in less time than it takes to say Tiglath Pileser. You know her ways. We all love her; but, at a time like this, we can't afford to let that count. Janet hasn't an ounce of management; and, last summer, she proved that she could act, act to a larger audience, and hold it, too, than any we shall have. As for Amy, she's a born manager; but her acting is —"

"Pokeristic," Amy cut in. "I agree with Sidney that there would not be any especial waste of talent, if I were put on the committee. Moreover, I've seen Janet act — in more ways than one. Sidney, do you remember that one night, after Jack had told us he was to take Mr. Savarin's place, last summer?"

"What was that?" her sister demanded. "You never told us about it, Amy."

"It was most untellable, also most dramatic. Janet

as the haughty modern lady quite outdid her own Madame Champlain. That is all I shall tell you, so you needn't tease; but you can take my word for it that Janet Leslie, when she chooses, can be an actor of sorts, all sorts."

And, while this discussion was going on in the invitation house just off the campus, the actor of sorts was helping Day Argyle to conduct a discussion of quite another kind.

They had found Phyllis wrestling with a weak-backed lexicon which had descended to her from Wade by way of Sidney. The lexicon had become flabby and invertebrate in the course of its long life; but its tendency to shed its leaves out on the floor was not wholly accountable for the gloom that lay upon the brow of Phyllis. Across the room, Marguerite Veronica sat curled up among the parti-coloured cushions which sought to disguise her bed into the semblance of a mere ornamental, day-time couch, sat and plied her needle with an industrious absorption in her own embroidery which gave the lie to her flushed cheeks and reddened lids. Both girls looked up and nodded, as their guests came in. Phyllis's nod was curt; that of Marguerite Veronica was full of a silent appeal for sympathy and for upper-class protection.

Day, noting the appeal, went to sit down beside her, then she took up a corner of the embroidered pillow cover which dangled from Marguerite Veronica's ringed hands.

"What a pretty thing, Marguerite!"

"You think so?" The appeal for protection was also in the tone.

"Of course. Who could help it?"

"I could," Phyllis said bluntly. "That's the cause of the present row."

"Row?" Day's tone was politely inquiring.

"Yes, row," Phyllis iterated curtly. "Don't be finicky, Day, and pretend you don't understand plain English. Any girl with a brother like Rob Argyle is bound to know what slang means, and to use it, too."

Day yielded silent acquiescence to the argument, and Janet took her hand at the conversation.

"Well, what is the — the row?" she asked, with a dainty emphasis upon the unlovely word, an emphasis that merely added fuel to the fires of Phyllis's temper.

"Nothing; only that Margaret," Phyllis totally refused to contaminate her lips with the softer form of her roommate's name; "that Margaret isn't contented to muss up her own bed with a lot of senseless pillows; but she insists upon it that I've got to have some, too."

"Well?"

"Well, I won't. I don't want the messy things around in my way, and she needn't go to work to make me any."

"Was she making this lovely one for you?" Day's tone suggested a reference to pearls and pigs.

"It's very simple, and her bed makes the room look so very bare," Marguerite Veronica interpolated, without a trace of the exuberance which, not so very long

ago, she had brought to college with her out of her native West.

"Suppose it does?" Phyllis responded curtly. "It's my bed; isn't it? And a bed is a bed; isn't it, not a parlour sofa? For my part, I like things to be just what they seem."

"And people?" Janet queried maliciously, for not all her loyalty to Sidney Stayre had as yet enabled her to tolerate Sidney's sister Phyllis.

Phyllis smoothed back her unruffled hair, once, twice.

"I always mean to let it appear just what I am at heart," she said virtuously.

Janet rose.

"I'm sorry," she said, with a terseness whose point was destined to prick Phyllis in the days to come.

"Day, are you ready to come home?"

But, even in the face of what had gone before, Day still clung fast to her conscientious intentions.

"In just a minute, Janet. I came over, Phyllis, to see if you would let me take you to the sophomore reception, next week."

There was an instant's hesitation. The reply, when it came, was crushing.

"Thank you, Day," Phyllis said, with elaborate courtesy. "I am sure you are very kind to think of me. Unfortunately, though, you are a little late. Miss Alspaugh came over, yesterday, just before dinner, and invited me to go with her. She is the junior vice-president, you know," she added, in courteous ex-

planation to whomsoever the intelligence might concern.

And Day departed, hugging her satisfied conscience in her arms. In her own great relief, she quite forgot, until a good hour later, to remind Janet that they had made no queries regarding the plans of Marguerite Veronica.

Reminded, Janet gave a perverse little laugh.

"It always does pay to be cantankerous," she said. "One gets ten times the attention that the meek ones do. I more than half suspect that Phyllis is choosing the shortest path to social greatness, after all."

CHAPTER FOUR

CERTAIN traditions are wellnigh unbreakable at Smith. One of these traditions demands that, on a night early in the opening year, the sophomores shall receive their friends and make merry with them. Another tradition ordains that, on the following day, all the college and even a few of the faculty shall betake themselves to the autumn woods, to drink in the bracing tang of the October air, and to rejoice their eyes with the glowing tints of the ripened trees. Nowhere else in all the world does the coming autumn array itself in finer colours than in the outskirts of the aged Massachusetts town. Nowhere else are there such wide stretches of level meadows, all dull brown earth, bright brown heaps of ripened onions, pale brown stacks of corn and paler stretches of bleached grassland, all dotted over thickly with the golden disks of monstrous pumpkins. Nowhere else do the low mountains rise so bluely against a bluer sky. Nowhere else do the forests take on such flaming, flaunting hues, yellow and orange, scarlet and tawny red. If any man doubt it, let him ask any one of all the graduates of Smith, ask and then note the answer. Nowhere else in all the world.

Day Argyle waked up early, on the morning of Mountain Day of her senior year. An excursion to



“Nowhere else in all the world does the coming autumn array
itself in finer colors.” *Page 42*

the nearest window assured her that already the sky was bright enough to match her anticipations. Then ruthlessly she stirred up Sidney.

"Wake up, you dormouse," she ordered her drowsy roommate, the while she pounced upon the sleeper's pillow. "Get up and dress yourself, even if you are senior president. Do you realize that the car will be here, the minute we're through breakfast, and that all that fruit is waiting, down town, and won't come up to find us?"

And Sidney rose and rubbed her sleepy eyes without a murmur. The prospect of the day before them was enough to call even a senior president from the rosiest of dreams.

The day, in fact, was to be somewhat of the nature of a reunion. For nine weeks of the previous summer, Janet and Sidney, Amy Pope and the two Argyles, together with a young cousin of Sidney, and Rob Argyle's chief friend, Jack Blanchard, had been together in the old Leslie house in Quebec. The summer had been an exciting season, not only by reason of the share the young people had taken in the ancient city's birthday celebration, but from their domestic happenings as well. The old stone house had held many divers interests of work and play, that summer; and for a season it also had held strife almost amounting to a civil war. Out of the strife, however, had grown some lasting friendships; and, at the very end, all bitterness had vanished, leaving behind it only the memory of the pleasant things.

Accordingly, it was no especial wonder that the three boys had decided to take advantage of the longest holiday of the greatest number, and to descend upon the college for Mountain Day. Amy Pope had imported her mother by way of chaperon; Jack Blanchard had appeared from New York, the noon before, Rob from Cambridge, that same night, while Paul Addison had taken the four girls completely by surprise by walking in upon them just after dinner.

"Suppose I was going to be left out of this circus?" he made laconic query. "Not on your life! Williams is only half a block away, and I've been saving up my cuts, all this term, for the benefit of this one expedition."

"All this term, you sinner!" Sidney said, as she picked herself out of his cousinly embrace. "That is exactly two whole weeks. Still, you were an angel to come down."

Paul cast an anxious glance at his shoulders, as he gave his hand to Janet.

"Oh, I hope not," he said hastily. "It must be blasted uncomfortable to have to sit on the corners of your wings."

Mrs. Pope, that night, played hostess and propriety for the gay septette in one of the reception rooms at the Inn. It was the first time she had seen any of the boys; she knew little about them, outside of Amy's enthusiastic bulletins concerning the summer's progress, and some of the bulletins had caused no little uneasiness within her motherly soul. On this account, therefore,

she studied the three boys keenly, the while she listened to their jovial talk and answered it in kind. Rob Argyle she dismissed without a question. His relationship to Day would have been enough, even without his face and bearing. No one, in fact, could ever look into Rob Argyle's dark blue eyes, could listen to his jolly laugh, could see his strong and well-knit figure which even his slight lameness was powerless to render awkward: no one could spend a dozen minutes face to face with Rob Argyle without accepting him for what he was, admirable, honourable. As for Paul Addison, he belonged to the same great class of healthy, high-minded college boys, a little less mature than Rob, a little bit more irresponsible, but just as well-bred, just as bright and sane, the sort of boy whom, quite by instinct, every girl is sure to choose as chum.

It was upon Jack Blanchard, though, that Mrs. Pope's eyes rested longest; and, as they rested, her wonder grew and grew. Jack Blanchard, in his outward seeming, was wholly alien to his story, as she had heard it from her daughter's lips, wholly alien to the self-assertive pseudo gentleman whom her maternal fears had constructed out of her daughter's enthusiastic words. To be sure, Amy Pope, by birth and by family tradition, ought to have been able to recognize gentleness at sight. None the less, Mrs. Pope had been distinctly uneasy, when she reflected on the sentimental haze that too often veils the crudeness of one risen from the ranks, and she had taken her first opportunity of looking over this young Canadian, who seemed able

to win the liking of all his chance companions, even to her own young daughter. The bare fact of his story was not reassuring, for Jack Blanchard, when the Argyles first had met him, had worn the uniform of the Pullman company; and Mrs. Pope had braced herself to meet the little strut and swagger which, she told herself, invariably accompanied the wearing of brass buttons.

To her extreme surprise, she found herself confronted with a wide-shouldered, steady-eyed young man whose well-bred ease matched that of Rob, whose dignity was even greater, a man who was well on in the later twenties, well-poised, well-groomed, and only missing great good looks by reason of an ugly scar across his temple, a scar adored by Day and Sidney, as being his badge of greatest honour, and speedily forgotten when one turned from it to look into the true brown eyes that seemed never to have known fear or shame. For one short instant, the eyes met those of Mrs. Pope. There was mutual interchange of question, answer. The next instant, though the wonder grew and grew, Mrs. Pope had yet dismissed all question. To her maturer eyes, it was plain that Amy's statements concerning Jack's parentage had been by no means all of them based upon the imaginings of girlish sentiment. As for his manliness and honour — No wonder that, in the strife of the preceding summer, Amy had been glad to take her stand upon his side. And yet — Mrs. Pope gave a little sigh of complete relief when, the greetings over, Sidney Stayre dropped down at Jack Blanchard's

side, and quite frankly fell to monopolizing his attention.

A little later on, that evening, Day excused herself and Sidney, and the two girls departed, leaving Paul and Rob and Jack to the tender mercies of Janet and the Popes. It would not be quite decent, Day explained, if the senior president did not show herself for just one dance at the sophomore reception. She would go, too, and make sure that Sidney returned to them, at the earliest possible moment. Accordingly, the two friends departed, arm in arm, the one to make her official turn about the floor, the other, a world of mischief in her brown eyes, to scour the place in search of Phyllis and find out, if she could, how the girl was enjoying herself.

The shortest possible search sufficed. Day found Phyllis in the foremost rank of the gallery, a buxom matron upon either side, and her escort, looking somewhat jaded, leaning diagonally across the nearer matron, to rest one guardian hand upon the back of Phyllis's chair. The position was as arduous as had been the conversation, yet sturdily the budding politician held her ground, since no one knew, nor was ever like to know, what waves of public opinion were to start forth from this strange sister of the senior president. Whatever might be the nature of such waves, no one, seeing Phyllis, could ever doubt their potential energy.

Quite unperceived by either girl, Day came up behind them and stood there for a moment, looking down upon the pretty scene below. As she looked, there came into her throat a little aching lump, came there for the

first of many times of all that senior year, the little lump arisen from the thought that, for her student self, this was the last time she would be standing there, one of the jolly students making merry after their traditional custom. For the first time, it suddenly dawned on Day Argyle that it was not altogether good to be a senior. What was the song Jack used to hum?

“Like an ancient river flowing
From the mountain to the sea,
So we follow, coming, going —”

Her brown eyes were curiously gentle, as they gazed down across the wistaria-decked room, across the tight-packed throng of girls, laughing, chattering, dancing, tossing salutations to and fro over each other's shoulders, girls in French embroideries and girls in plain tucked muslins, all jumbled in together into one merry mass, all too intent upon the passing hour to heed the questions rising in Day's mind. But did the drops never wish they could free themselves a little, and turn back against the tide? Was any other life quite so dear and jolly as was this? She shook away her thoughts, and spoke to Phyllis who was gloomily eyeing the floor beneath.

“Having a good time, Phil?” she called across the intervening backs.

Phyllis turned her head, and bent on Day the same glare she had been bestowing on the floor.

“No. Of course not.”

“Sorry. Why not?”

Phyllis hurled the question back at her.

"Why should I?"

"Oh, it's so pretty. Aren't the girls dear, to-night?"

"Very likely they are always dear, when one comes to know them well," Phyllis proclaimed stiffly.

"But in their pretty frocks?" Day urged.

"I," Phyllis laid a heavy stress upon the pronoun; "have never found that pretty frocks affected one's moral nature."

"I have," Day assured her cheerily, while she turned her eyes expressively towards Phyllis's jaded-looking escort. "I am always better tempered, when I've a becoming gown. Why aren't you down there on the floor, Phil, and enjoying yourself with the others?"

Phyllis answered her with some asperity.

"You know perfectly well, Day Argyle, that I don't know how to dance."

"Come and learn, then," Day suggested rashly. "The Alpha room is open and almost empty."

"Then go and dance in it," Phyllis advised her. "For my own part, I've never cared to hop about the floor like a — a capering monkey."

There was no especial wonder that a pause should follow. Phyllis herself broke it, moodily and with her gaze once more upon the floor beneath.

"I," again came the accent upon the pronoun; "I should hate to be as popular a girl as Sidney."

"I wouldn't worry about that, if I were you," Day assured her sweetly. Then, without waiting to pro-

long the conversation further, she left Phyllis to her lawful escort, and went down in search of Sidney.

"Do you think Sidney minds?" Rob asked his sister, the next day.

Forgetting her mirth over the recital of her last night's conversation, Day's brown eyes grew grave.

"More than she cares to have any of us know," she said. "It's not that she's just ashamed of Phyllis and hurt upon her own account, Rob; but, after a fashion, Sidney loves the girl."

"How can she?"

"Sidney is large enough for almost anything," Day answered; "large enough to believe that, under all her crankiness, Phil has a certain streak of goodness. I confess, though, I can't see where."

"Nor I," Rob pondered. "Do you really think she cares for Phil; or does she just shut her teeth and make the best of her?"

"She really does care for her, Rob. To be sure, Phil is as decent to Sidney as it's in her to be to any girl. When they are alone together, Sidney says she's like another person."

Rob shook his yellow head at his clasped thumbs.

"Sidney always was an optimist," he murmured.

Day suppressed her laugh as unregenerate, but not her words.

"Now and then she needs to be," she said.

It was high noon of Mountain Day, their long-expected Mountain Day. Under the hot sun of midday, the little party were sitting on the dusty roadside grass,

less than a mile from home, eating their luncheon and pretending to admire the view. As the view consisted of a red brick factory with three tall chimneys, and, beside it, an open field where a blue-jumpered man was digging potatoes, their efforts at enthusiasm by now had worn a little threadbare. Before them in the dusty road stood the great blue touring car which Rob had ordered up from Springfield for the long day's run, and, on his back beneath the car, prone in the sand, lay the chauffeur, seeking the reason that the car refused to budge another inch. Moreover, the chauffeur had lain there, seeking, occasionally coming up to breathe and shake the sand out of his collar, then wriggling back again, while the dew of morning burned off the fields, and the sun of noon mounted the heavens. And, meanwhile, there had slowly trickled past them a stream of girls in every variety of humbler conveyance, girls who, five hours before, had watched with envious eyes their haughty exit from the campus.

Suddenly Janet flirled the crumbs from her lap, and started to her feet.

"I'm not naturally sensitive, girls; but I must vanish," she said hastily. "Here comes my roommate, in that surrey; and, for two weeks, I have been impressing it upon her that I could not go off for a drive with her, because we had planned this all-day motor trip. Paul, are you going to help me to escape?"

Paul glanced up from the paper in his hand.

"By and by, Janet," he said. "I am busy now. Amy and I are going to play a memorial game of tit-tat-too."

We passed many pleasant hours playing it, you know, the last time that our progress was arrested."

"Have you heard from the baby lately, Amy?" Jack asked, as he arose and prepared to follow Janet.

"Yes. I had a letter from her ladyship, last week. Arthur Eugene is well and cutting some more teeth."

"I am sorry for her, then," Jack said fervently, for there had been something to be desired in the temper of the baby whom Amy once had rescued from a possible asylum and given over to the care of a certain Lady Wadhams.

"I am more sorry for him," Amy retorted. "Suppose you had been named Arthur Eugene! It's enough to —"

"Mote the unmotable," Paul cut in suddenly. "By Jove, he's got it at last!" And the smiling, smeary countenance of the chauffeur, as he crawled stiffly out from his narrow quarters, was enough to confirm Paul's words.

"Quick! Get the things in, before that snail of a surrey gets here!" Janet ordered. "I simply will not have those girls find out how we have sat here, this whole livelong morning."

But the surrey was alongside, long before the luncheon baskets were packed on board, and the car had ended its preliminary growls and purrings. Janet met their questions loftily.

"Yes. It was such a lovely day, we decided to save our main trip for the afternoon and evening," she said blandly. "We're just starting now, so perhaps you'd

best keep back a little; else, we'll have to pass you in a minute."

At the chauffeur's express desire, he was allowed a place back in the car where he could listen, for a little, to the whirring of the motors. Jack took the wheel, for, long since, he had learned to run the Argyle car.

"Who is coming up beside me?" he asked, as his eyes, sweeping from Amy to Janet, finally came to rest on Day.

And Day took her place beside him.

All through the morning long, Day's mood of the night before had hung about her. It did not sadden her now; it only made her the quicker to snatch the happiness out of every passing minute; it only made her a little gentler in her judgments, even of the inevitable discomforts of their long halt beside the dusty road. Now, mounted at Jack's side and once more in motion, it seemed to the girl that her content was full. Around her, the country spread away, hill rising gently over hill, the nearer ones blazing with yellow birch and tawny oak and flaming scarlet maple, those more distant turning to a vivid blue wall above which the paler sky rose to an arching, gleaming zenith. Beneath her, the car hummed steadily; and beside her was Jack, his brown eyes on the road before him, his lean brown hands upon the wheel, speechless, but yielding tacit answer to her unspoken mood. Day nestled towards him suddenly. Long since, both she and Jack had wellnigh ceased to be aware that he was not her own real brother, but

merely her father's secretary and an alien informally adopted into the Argyle home.

"I'm so happy, Jack," she told him. "Isn't it perfect: the day, and all the rest of it?"

"Even the morning?" he inquired, his eyes still on the road before him.

"By comparison, yes. Besides, what difference? It just postponed the fun a little. There's a full moon, you know, and Mrs. Pope says we needn't hurry back. Oh — Jack!"

As if in answer to her sudden exclamation, Jack nodded shortly, and shut his teeth, while his lean hands clinched themselves upon the wheel. Out from the farmhouse yard beside the road, a stout old collie, slow and clumsy with his years, came shuffling across their course. It was evident that the years had made him deaf, as well as slow and portly, for he came shuffling forward, heedless of the warning screeches of the motor. At last, however, he appeared to feel its throbbing; and he came to a sudden halt, turning his whitening muzzle and his kindly, anxious eyes full on the approaching car, now barely twenty feet away, while his venerable tail wagged a deprecating welcome. Day shut her hands together, turned her eyes away from the trusting, reproachful gaze bent on the car and fixed them on Jack's face, whitening a little beneath its summer tan. His hands shut harder on the wheel, and the car veered sharply to one side, clearing the dog by a bare tail-length. Then, before it could be steadied into its new course, it had run into a rut, and from the rut into a

puddle. There it skidded sharply, swerved again, crossed the road and went crashing through a rail fence to come to a halt, sudden and violent, against a woodpile just beyond.

If the car had been speeding, Day's college course would have come to an abrupt end. Even a twelve-mile rate, however, can give much force to a large-sized touring car, and the sudden bump against the woodpile threw them helter-skelter from their seats. When they picked themselves up from the bottom of the car and called the roll of their small bruises, one voice was missing. Jack, thrown completely from the car, lay on the ground beside the woodpile, while beside him, gently licking his white face, stood the stout old collie he had saved, uninjured.

CHAPTER FIVE

WHEN Phyllis heard the news, —

“After all, Sidney,” she said, with an asperity born of her first ride in a hayrack, an all-day ride and over sundry hummocky hills; “after all, it does seem a little like the clutching hand of retributive justice.”

For the once, Sidney was too intent upon the fact to heed the sounding phrase.

“Justice, Phil!” she rebelled. “Justice for dear old Jack to get a broken rib and a cracked ankle bone!”

Phyllis shifted her ground a little.

“Seems to me Jack is always having things happen to him,” she observed.

“Because he always forgets about himself, when it’s a case of looking out for other people,” Sidney reminded her gently.

Phyllis had the grace to blush. Jack’s worst scar had come out of the evening he had saved her from a hideous, fiery death. Nevertheless, —

“A dog is not a person,” she argued, after a minute.

“No.”

“And he had no right to jeopardize all your lives for the sake of a mere dumb brute.”

Sidney rose, her cheeks scarlet, her eyes glittering with unshed tears.

"He didn't jeopardize our lives," she said a little shortly. "The car skidded; that was all." Then she flung her arm across her sister's shoulder. "Phil, don't you care for anybody, even Jack?" she besought her.

For just a moment, the pale eyes clouded, and below them the chin quivered. But, because the hayrack had had a middle hollow bordered with sharp-edged boards, Phyllis made lofty answer, —

"Of course, Sidney. What a foolish question! However, even the fact that I care a great deal for Jack ought not to stultify my judgment."

Then, inasmuch as she really did love Jack well, and also because she was tired and nervous and had held out as long as she possibly could, Phyllis's head went down on Sidney's shoulder, and the tears came fast.

Quickly she brushed them away again, however, lifted her head and stood facing Sidney, stiff and straight.

"What a fool I was to cry," she said roughly. "Tell me, Sidney, what's the first thing I can do to help along?"

"Nothing to-night, dear." Sidney dropped down into a chair and turned to look up at her, wondering, as she so often had wondered before, just why it was that Phyllis was so chary of showing out her really kind heart. Granted the real need, Phyllis was quick to see, tireless to serve, patient, even, to bear. It was when life was at its smoothest that she stuck out her thorns. Sidney roused herself.

"What can I do?" Phyllis was demanding.

“Nothing at all, dear; only —” To her own consternation as well as that of Phyllis, Sidney felt that her voice was breaking. The past two hours of anxiety and of hasty action had told even on her young, level nerves, and, moreover, she, like Day, was very, very fond of Jack. She felt a babyish longing to put her head down on her arm and cry, and cry, and cry. Then she steadied herself. Downstairs with Mrs. Leslie, Rob was waiting for her to finish telling Phyllis of the accident; and Rob, as she well knew, had scanty enjoyment of feminine tears. She steadied herself sharply.

“Only?” Phyllis jogged her.

“Only cuddle me a little, Phil. It’s been an awful time for us all. We were miles from anywhere, not even a telephone in reach, and it seemed for a while —” Sidney’s voice broke again.

Phyllis sat down on the arm of Sidney’s chair, and rested her great, knuckly hand upon her sister’s throbbing head.

“I wouldn’t cry, Sidney,” she said, with a slow, heavy kindness quite alien to her customary nipping speech. “Really, it won’t do any good. The worst is over now, for everybody but Jack. You say he’s at the hospital?”

“Yes. It seemed as if we never could get him there. The car was broken a little; we couldn’t get word to anybody to come for him, and the nearest farmhouse was locked up. Paul started off at random to get help somewhere; but, before he came back, the chauffeur had patched up the car, and, after a fashion, we were able to get Jack to the hospital.”

"Where is the hospital?"

Sidney made a vague gesture with her head.

"Out towards Florence."

"Oh, I know the place. And then?"

"Then Janet and Amy came home in the car. The rest of us waited to hear what the doctors said. Jack is so heavy, and he fell with such force that they say it is a wonder that he wasn't killed."

"Hh!" Phyllis grunted. "Lean consolation! How is he now?"

"He was as comfortable as they could expect, when we left him."

"When was that?"

"About six."

"How soon are you going back again?" Phyllis demanded.

"Sometime to-morrow." Sidney rose. "Rob is waiting, Phil. I must go."

Obeying some sudden impulse, born of the afternoon's alarms, she put up her face for a kiss. Grudgingly, but with mathematical precision, Phyllis placed the kiss upon the very middle of her forehead.

"Good night, Sid. Don't worry; it will all come out right in the end," she bade her sister, with a gruff kindness. Then, as the door closed after Sidney, she added to herself, "Sometime to-morrow! Hh!"

A moment later, Marguerite Veronica appeared upon the threshold, yawning wearily, and Phyllis buried her long nose behind the nearest book. It was not until Marguerite Veronica had subsided, a mass of lace-edged

frills, between the blankets and pulled the sheet up to shut the light out of her sleepy eyes that Phyllis vouchsafed to her a single glance. Then, lifting her head from her book, she turned her spectacles upon the sunburned countenance upon the pillow.

"Sleepy?" she asked, with the same gruff kindness she had bestowed on Sidney. "All right. I'll go to bed. I — I hope you'll be rested in the morning —" Phyllis swallowed, as if something choked her, then added in a sudden, spasmodic gulp, "dear."

And Marguerite Veronica, tired as she was, lay awake long, that night, pondering the meaning of the unwonted outburst. Fortunately for her vanity, she had no notion that the real cause and object of the outburst was not her frilly, sunburned little self, but rather the picture of Jack Blanchard which was filling the whole foreground of her roommate's mind.

It was as Sidney had told her sister: for the first hour after the accident, the little group could have been no more helpless to act, had they been stranded on a desert island. They were on a lonely country road, miles and miles from any town. The one house discoverable in the neighbourhood was deserted by all its occupants besides the aged dog who, it must be confessed, was doing everything in his canine power to express his pity for the victim of the accident, his anxiety to be of service. Had there been a telephone wire in sight, neither Rob nor Paul would have had the slightest hesitation in forcing an entrance to the house; but that thread of hope was denied them. All

they could do was to wait until help came, or until the chauffeur could contrive to get the car to running, and, while they waited, to make Jack as comfortable as possible upon the ground. Only slightly stunned by the shock of his fall, Jack had come to himself almost at once, and, disregarding his pain as best he could, he had set to work to allay the anguish of the girls. Paul, meanwhile, had gone rushing forward along the road in search of help, while Rob had returned to the nearest crossroads, there to mount guard, in the hope of waylaying some passer-by. He was still sitting on a fallen log, gloomily pondering on the chances of the next few weeks, as concerned his best friend, when the whirr of the car and a hail from Paul aroused him from his lonesome meditations.

"I came back just in time to see them starting off without me," Paul explained, as the car drew up at Rob's side. "Tumble in, old man, any place you can find. Jack and his head nurse are bound to have the back seat to themselves. Here, get in here. I'll sit on the floor and hang my heels outside." And, with the girls huddled together in the middle of the car, and Paul's long legs trailing out across the steps, the little party, jovial no longer, had set out for home.

The hospital was very full just then; but the "dogs' room" was unoccupied, and there they carried Jack, too tired out with the pain to pay much heed to his surroundings. Next morning early, after a little fitful napping, he waked to watch the light in his room turn from gray to white, then yellow, and, as he watched it,

his eyes rested contentedly upon the pictures of the great, friendly Saint Bernards in memory of whom the room was given. Jack smiled a little, as he lay and watched them. Broken bones were broken bones, and a dog was only a dog. However, granted that he himself was to be the only victim, he was glad that that friendly, wagging tail had not expressed its trust in vain. The first clear impression of his returning consciousness had been of two honest, pitiful brown eyes peering down into his own. To be sure, though, there was the office. His brows contracted.

An instant later, his eyes grew keen, and he raised his head as far as prudence and a warning spasm of pain allowed him. From down upon the lawn below his open window, he heard two voices, low, but coming clearly up to him across the stillness of the early dawn. The one he recognized at once as belonging to Paul Addison. The other caused him a little longer uncertainty. Then, —

“By Jove, it’s Phil!” he muttered to himself. “What in thunder is that child doing up here at such an unholy hour?”

In sheer astonishment, his head dropped back upon his pillow. Then, as the words of the low-voiced colloquy grew clearer, he craned his neck again to listen; and, listening, despite his broken bones and aching body, Jack Blanchard chuckled as he heard.

The dawn had scarcely grayed the eastern edge of the sky when Phyllis was astir, that morning. With the stealthy step of a professional cracksman, she moved

to and fro in her room, assaulting her hair with vicious strokes of the comb, preparatory to winding it into the tightest possible knob, and dragging on her various garments as if she were bent on reducing them to tatters in her haste. When the last hook and eye and pin were in place, she caught up her hat, skewered it firmly to the exact top of her head, softly left the room, softly let herself out of the great white front door whose big brass knocker clattered a muffled protest at this early violation of its morning nap. Then, treading very softly on the grass, Phyllis stepped to the street and turned northward.

Once she was quite away from the house, her step quickened; and, in a comparatively short time, she had covered the intervening mile and was entering the grounds of the hospital. Then and then only did her step slow itself, not from fatigue, but from sheer uncertainty as to the next thing for her to do. Thoroughly alarmed and unhappy about Jack, whom she long had counted as one of her best friends, Phyllis had slept but little, all the night before. Lying awake, she had done much thinking, had laid away many and many a plan as to how she could show her devotion in Jack's behalf. Unhappily, the plans developed during the sleepless midnight hours do not always stand the clearer light of day; not, at least, without having their brightness faded a little by the glare. Phyllis's morning exit had seemed to her, judged even in the gray of the dawn, a noble thing to do. Now, in the glittering light of sunrise, she began to doubt, to wish

that she had stayed at home and telephoned. At that unseemly hour of the morning, it would be easier to explain the appearance of her anxious voice than of her tight-girt person which, as far as its looks went, might never have been to bed at all. And besides — She looked up sharply, as a step sounded on the gravel close behind her.

She liked the look of what she saw: a tall, spare figure, a jovial freckled face, just now a little heavy-eyed and anxious. She liked the eyes especially, gray eyes and friendly, and holding in their depths a little spark of something that, under other circumstances, might develop into fun. Just now, however, their owner was too intent upon what lay before him to be in any mood for seeking fun.

Phyllis looked him over from head to heel, came to the prompt decision that he was some hospital attendant, going on duty at that early hour, and shrewdly decided that, in any case, she would open conversation, if only to explain to him her presence there so early.

“I beg your pardon,” she said abruptly.

Instantly the stranger halted, swept off his cap and stood there, bareheaded in the rising sunlight, awaiting her next word.

The word, when it came, astonished him completely.

“What do you know about Mr. Blanchard?” Phyllis demanded comprehensively.

“What do I know? About Jack Blanchard?” In his amazement, the speaker cut her question into two exact halves.

"Yes," she said a little bit impatiently. "Do you know who he is?"

"Rather."

"How is he?"

The stranger gasped before the fire of questions. Phyllis, in search for information, could have put a Gatling gun to shame. Then he rallied.

"Rather bad, I should imagine. He had an accident, yesterday, and —"

"Hhmm!" Phyllis's response was quite unspellable. "What do you think brought me out here?"

"You knew it, then?"

"Of course," she said tartly. "Why shouldn't I?"

Despite his manifest anxiety, the fun came now into the stranger's eyes.

"The question is, why should you?" he made deliberate observation.

Phyllis, never too long of temper, felt that this was no proper time for joking.

"I naturally would know about it," she said loftily. "As it happens, my sister told me, last night. She was in it, too."

"In?" The stranger raised his eyes inquiringly, for Phyllis's meaning seemed to him opaque.

"In the accident."

"Your sister?"

Phyllis made a snatch at one corner of her patience and clung to it as hard as she was able.

"Yes. My sister, Sidney Stayre."

"The deuce!"

"You needn't curse about it," Phyllis rebuked him. "I can see no reason that she shouldn't tell me."

But, heedless of her argument, the stranger stood and gazed at her, as if spellbound.

"The deuce!" he said again. "Are you Tids's sister? Who'd ever think it?"

His use of a nickname, known, as she supposed, to Wade alone, reduced Phyllis in her turn to a state of astonishment which deafened her to certain unflattering cadences in his tone.

"Who are you?" she demanded.

"Your cousin," the stranger answered, and mirth, deprecation and an edge of regret were mingled in his voice.

"Are you Paul Addison?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm Phyllis," she said conclusively. "What are you doing here?"

"Same thing you are, apparently, trying to get some news of Jack. My train goes in about an hour, and I thought I'd get more out of these old duffers, if I came, instead of telephoning. But, I say," his honest glance swept her from head to heel, a glance which seemed to Phyllis to be questioning, not critical; "do you mean to say you hauled yourself out of bed and came up here at this unholy hour, just for Jack, when you had the whole day before you?"

Something in his voice made Phyllis forget that, as a rule, it was her custom to become aggressive when her deeds were questioned. Instead, —

"I had to, I was so anxious," she said simply.

Again the gray eyes swept her over. This time, they held something akin to admiration in their gaze.

"Well, I must say, you're a chum worth having," their owner said abruptly. "Not many of us have such spunky friends to stand by us, when we're knocked down and out. I say, cousin, give us your hand. I'll be hanged if I don't rather like you."

The family compact sealed, Paul spoke again.

"Perhaps, as long as I'm the man of this expedition, I'd best be the one to tackle the guardian of the watch. I'll get all I can out of him, and leave a card with both our names on it — Hold on!" Paul rummaged in his pockets. "Write a message, yourself. He'll like it all the better." And, a moment later, card in hand, he went leaping up the steps.

"It's good, as far as it goes," he said, a little later, as he rejoined Phyllis and, beside her, turned to leave the grounds. "It will lay him up for a season, and it's bound to hurt. Still, it might have been worse, lots worse. Shall we take a car? No? All right, come on."

At the door of Mrs. Leslie's house, he halted and held out his hand.

"I say," he blurted out; "I'm glad I've seen you. What's more, I think maybe we've started out, good friends. Let's keep it up. I'll write you, in a day or two, to find out what you hear from Jack." And then, because the time for his train was perilously near, he made a dash at a passing car and vanished within its doorway.

For a moment, Phyllis stood looking after it, a new expression in her washed-out eyes. For the first time in her life, all her life, she had been taken as she was, had been liked, not in spite of herself, but because of it. Then, the new light still in her eyes, she turned away, opened the door and mounted to her room, there to surprise Marguerite Veronica, drowsily brushing out her curly locks, by the quality of her morning greeting.

Two hours later, however, as if to belie, even to herself, her previous mood of kindness, she recurred to her theory of retributive justice.

This time, Janet was the recipient of her views. Janet, dropping into her mother's room to see if Mrs. Leslie had any later news of Jack, had crossed the hall to leave a message from Sidney. She found Phyllis quite alone, for Marguerite Veronica was at recitation, and Phyllis, taken by herself, was not a potent magnet to attract chance callers.

"But I can't see any justice about it," Janet remarked, after Phyllis had set forth her views at length.

"Justice often smites sideways," Phyllis answered her ponderously.

"Yes; but what had anybody done to deserve smiting?" Janet queried, not from contrariety, but from an honest wish for information.

"The natural thing for you four girls to have done," Phyllis told her virtuously; "especially on this final Mountain Day of your college course, would have been to have thrown yourselves, heart and soul, into the

plans of your classmates, not go off with a party of mere outsiders."

"Oh!" Janet's comment was terse, but not exactly reverent. "But we liked this better."

"The greater pleasure doesn't always come out of one's personal likings," Phyllis made sententious rejoinder.

A naughty light came into Janet's eyes.

"Did you have a good Mountain Day, Phil?" she asked discursively.

"Very." Phyllis's tone was prim.

"What did you do?"

"We went to Shutesbury."

"I know. Is it a pretty town?"

"Ye-es."

"What did you do there?" Janet pursued.

Phyllis hesitated.

"We ate our lunch in a pasture. Then some of the girls rode horseback. There were some horses in the pasture."

"What did you do? You don't ride; do you?"

"I—I went to walk in the graveyards," Phyllis explained conscientiously. "They were very old ones, and I thought they might be interesting."

Janet abandoned that line of question.

"And what did you do all the way up and back?" she queried innocently.

Phyllis smothered a reminiscent groan.

"We lay on the hay, and—and sang *Alma Mater*," she replied, and, in spite of herself, a note of disdain rang in her voice.

"And you enjoyed it all, I suppose, as long as you were with your classmates," Janet observed, her eyes upon the tree outside the window.

Too late, Phyllis realized the trap. Granted it must be sprung, however, she herself would do the springing. She smoothed back her hair and lifted up her chin.

"I don't know when I have spent such a happy day," she answered, in one magnificent, mendacious outburst.

Then she suddenly remembered it was time she started for a recitation.

CHAPTER SIX

M^RS. POPE was that rare type of woman who could make her social engagements yield to the advantage of her neighbour and to her own common sense. She had come to Northampton for a few days with her two daughters, before going to the Berkshire hills to begin a round of visits that would fill her time until late autumn. However, she was keen enough to see that Jack Blanchard's convalescence, bound at best to be long and tiresome, could be materially lightened by frequent calls from his quartette of gay girl friends, granted the proper chaperon. Accordingly, yielding to an idea that most women would have dubbed hysterical, although it seemed to her a matter of sheer common sense, she had telegraphed to her first hostess, and written to her second and third. That done, she exchanged her temporary quarters for a larger room, unpacked her trunk down to the bottommost foundation layers, and prepared to settle down and, for a time, become that chaperon.

"Why not?" she said to Mrs. Leslie. "My husband is in South America. Till he comes back, I shall either live in a boarding-house, or visit. I may as well be near the girls as anywhere. Besides," she added a little inconsequently; "I like the boy."

And Mrs. Leslie assented, more for the sake of her own boy, absent in England, than for Jack. She liked Jack a good deal as a matter of course, because the others did. She had seen very little of him, however, during the four years since he and Janet had become acquainted; and she was quite British enough in all of her ideas never to down completely the memory of the brass buttons. Indeed, it had been only during the past summer and after weeks of struggle that Janet herself had been able to down, not the memory of them, but the prejudice that they called forth. But Mrs. Leslie had been in England, that past summer, and she had shared but few of Janet's New York visits. Her knowledge of Jack, then, had been mainly limited to his occasional Sundays spent with Day at college. As for his growing friendship with Janet, Mrs. Leslie accepted it as more or less inevitable, but deplored it, even while she accepted. In her secret heart, she always felt he might pull out a conductor's punch and fall to work upon the nearest card-tray just at some highly inconvenient moment. On the other hand, Mrs. Pope, who had a Pilgrim ancestor for every finger and thumb, at the end of her first hour's talk with Jack had accepted him quite simply and for what he was: an intelligent and honest gentleman.

Accordingly, then, for the next few weeks, Mrs. Pope took up her abode beside the campus, where she swiftly became a species of honorary member of the senior class, useful, valuable, and pampered. Always ready for a frolic at any hour from dawn to dusk, always just as

ready to settle down, thimble in hand, in Amy's room, or in that of Sidney or Day, the two main centres of the senior life, she made herself a boon comrade of each one of the girls in turn, seemingly as young as they, yet never failing to add a guiding word of maturer wisdom in times of student indecision. Bit by bit, even the girls nearer the outside edges of the circle came to count on asking her advice, on taking it when given, even on swallowing the little lectures she bestowed upon them, every now and then, apropos of some bit of worldly knowledge whose facts they had reported quite awry. The lectures were made the more palatable, doubtless, by Mrs. Pope's gay voice and pretty frocks, by her quiet way of taking it for granted that she knew the world only at its best; not at its richest, but at its most refined. Occasionally, too, her lectures needed something to make them palatable. Snobbery she hated, and any touch of loudness in dress or manner; moreover, asked, she never held back her opinion. Yet, strange to say, the girls received her lectures meekly, for they were fast coming, in those autumn weeks, to the sad realization that, for them, girl-time was almost ended, that, within a few short months, they would be pushed gently forward out of college and into the uncharted seas of the world beyond, of self-controlling womanhood, for which, after all said and done, their Greek and history and science had done so little to prepare them.

"Mother's elective," Amy came in time to dub the afternoons when they all sat together, as many of

them as could pack themselves on chairs and beds and floor, and talked over bit by bit the problems that would confront them in the life beyond. In the time of it, to all but Mrs. Pope herself, the discussions seemed casual, futile, almost frivolous in their point of view. Later on, years later, not one of the girls failed to think back to those idle talks, and to be grateful for some trivial word culled from them. The "elective," however, was by no means always carried on within four walls. A dozen girls and a chance question sufficed to start it up, whether the dozen were afield, afloat, or clattering across the country in a trolley car. Moreover, after the discussion was at an end, the girls were always a little bit surprised to remember how slight Mrs. Pope's spoken part in it had been. Often a short nod or two and a little word of assent left upon them the impression of a half-hour monologue.

As the "elective" grew in popularity, the girls were a little inclined to grudge the daily hours which Mrs. Pope was spending at the hospital. At first, they had regarded it as a distinct advantage that she should have an outside interest to claim her, while they were busy or absorbed in other things. Bit by bit, however, they came to resent her manifest absorption in her invalid, the increasing time she gave to him, now that his convalescence allowed him to receive longer visits. At least once in every day, Mrs. Pope boarded the car for the hospital, to stay there just as long as Jack's strength and pleasure would allow. As a general rule, one of the girls was with her, sometimes Janet, but more often

Sidney or Amy. Day, by reason of her semi-relationship and at her mother's wish, dropped in upon Jack at all sorts of hours, sometimes with Mrs. Pope, sometimes with only the nurse to play propriety.

Jack's welcome to the girls varied a little in its quality. The days were long, boresome and filled with no small amount of pain and weariness; and he was unfeignedly grateful to them all for stealing so much time out of their busy student lives to waste it, as he phrased it, upon him. Their visits did him a world of good in more ways than one, and he took care to let them know it. However, Mrs. Pope, the one constant factor in all the visits, derived no small amusement from watching the different phases of his character which Jack displayed to each in turn. He sparred with Janet, argued with Amy, confided in Sidney. With Day alone, he dropped it all, argument and sparring and even confidence, and treated her as if she were merely a part of his own life, very dear, very reliable and so familiar as to make all argument or explanation needless. With the other girls, there was the little glad excitement of their coming, the little chivalric effort, the only effort of which a man flat on his back was capable, to make them feel their welcome and to enjoy their stay. Their calls aroused him, cheered him, but also they tired him. Day's calls left him rested, quiet, curiously refreshed. Nevertheless, an outsider, looking on, would have found it wellnigh impossible to discover wherein the difference lay. Day chaffed him, laughed with him, told over all her doings and demanded his advice just as the others

did, only, perhaps, a little more specifically. None the less, there was a difference. Jack felt it, even if Day did not.

"But, Jack," she said to him suddenly, one day; "you certainly do have the most ignominious sources for your invalidisms."

Jack, promoted to a rolling chair and the great sun parlour overlooking the low western hills, now almost bare of coloured leaves, glanced up at the swift arraignment.

"Guilty," he confessed.

"Whether it is worse: a leaky chafing-dish, or a senile collie?" she propounded. "If you were a proper sort of hero, Jack, you'd choose a more romantic way to go about it."

"Hang it! I'm no hero, Day," he protested, with a vigour which roused the nurse from her magazine and brought her to the rescue.

"Did you call, Mr. Blanchard?" she inquired.

Jack's laugh was most healthily out of keeping with the details of his surroundings.

"I was merely calling down Miss Argyle. I'm so sorry I started you up by my energy," he told her. "I fear I'm a most troublesome patient. Go back and rest a little longer. I think you've built me up until I have strength to deal with Miss Argyle as she deserves."

The nurse laughed and nodded. Then she returned to her corner and her book. Long since, she had found out the curiously close relation that existed between

her patient and his present guest. In fact, her charts alone would have betrayed it to her, without much other telling. Jack was never restless, his temperature never mounted by so much as a degree after Day's calls.

"Yes, I know," Day persisted, when once more the nurse was buried in the printed page before her; "but it's not quite decent for a man to have been through the Boer War, and to have travelled half a million miles or so, and then get himself laid low in ways that a reporter, that Wade Winthrop, for instance, would scorn to chronicle. Why can't you be nice and romantic, Jack?"

Jack, lounging in his chair, studied her with leisurely, contented glances. Day was not pretty in the least, according to the judgment of a total stranger. Her friends, however, thought otherwise. And yet, her only claim to real beauty lay in her fluffy mop of pale brown hair, her brave brown eyes, now dancing with fun, now hazy with her girlish dreams, lay in her strong, lithe body, in her blending of gentleness and perfect health. She was restful, too. However eager she became, Day never interrupted, never fidgeted. She had all the time there was, and she saw to it that it should be quite enough.

To-day, she seemed to Jack to be in her most attractive mood, gentle, but full of teasing fun which yielded every now and then to the little wave of sisterly affection that was close second to what she customarily reserved for Rob. She had come up, directly after chapel, to find Jack moved into the sun parlour for the first time, and

her pleasure at this proof of his gain had flushed her cheeks and brightened the lustre of her eyes. Now, as she sat opposite him in her high-backed chair, her happy face framed with the drooping feathers of her wide green hat, it seemed to Jack, watching her, that he might search the broad world over, without finding another girl one half so comely. And better far than all her comeliness and, to Jack, more wonderful, was her quiet and complete forgetfulness that there was such a person in the world as Day Argyle.

Now, a little restive at his silent scrutiny, she bent forward in her chair and broke in upon his musing with a question.

“Comf’y, Jack?”

“Completely. Don’t I look it?” he returned, smiling across into her questioning face.

“Yes, as far as a man in hospital can do,” she responded. “However, I thought you seemed a little as if something were — well, worrying a little.”

“I? Worrying?” His eyes showed his astonishment at the charge.

Day settled back again in her chair.

“Well, if you must have it out in plain Saxon,” she rebuked him gayly; “you showed that you didn’t hear one single word I was saying.”

“I did, too,” he contradicted. “You were raging at me because I didn’t choose my wreckages with care, and I was trying to decide how I could better my method.”

“By catching a runaway aeroplane by the tail, and

helping a gauzy circus lady to climb down the nearest tree," Day suggested.

"Where do I come in?"

"She could make a misstep and tumble down on you and break your patella," Day finished out her suggestion.

"I'll do it, next time," Jack assured her gravely. "That is, unless you'd rather I attacked a raging and spotted hyena."

But suddenly Day refused to laugh.

"Don't have any more next times," she besought him, and there came a new note in her gay young voice. "Between you and Rob, it seems to me I never know an easy minute. Either he is straining his leg and being put to bed again, or else you are trying to keep somebody from being burned to death. Jack, I don't mean to be like a clucking hen; but I believe, if I had another brother, real or adopted, I should be beside myself with worry."

"But really, Day, it hasn't been so bad, this time."

"Bad!" Her glance swept from him to his surroundings. "Do you mean you enjoy this sort of thing?"

"Not especially. Still —"

"I should hope not," she interrupted. "And you don't. Put out your hands, both of them, and see how all the tan is gone, and how lean they look. And see —"

His laugh sought to reassure her.

"But it really hasn't been so bad, Day," he iterated. "The worst of it was the knowing I was needed rather badly at the office. Otherwise —" And then his voice dropped down an octave, as he added, "Day,

do you realize what a difference it has made, my being within hailing distance of you girls? ”

“ It has saved me from a lot of worry,” she made practical rejoinder. “ Really, Jack, it’s been a comfort to see for myself just how you were getting on. Rob and I were talking about that, after we were out here, last Sunday. I think, if I hadn’t been here to send home bulletins, Daddy would have moved up here and camped out on the lawn. By the way, I had a frenzied letter from Irene, last night. In the wild excitement of finding you had moved out here, I almost forgot to tell you.”

“ What now? Has Wade been misbehaving? Irene isn’t prone to fits of frenzy.”

“ No; it isn’t Wade. It’s only you.”

“ What about me? I haven’t misbehaved,” Jack rebelled.

“ What about the wedding? ” Day queried pointedly.

“ Oh, that.” Jack clasped his hands behind his head.

“ What’s the rumpus about the wedding, Day? ”

“ You needn’t sham,” Day rebuked him sternly.

“ You are perfectly well aware that we, every single one of us who were in Quebec, last summer, have been holding our breath to see if you were going to get well in time.”

“ What a state of wholesale asphyxiation! ” Jack made callous observation at the opposite wall.

“ Wholesale alarm,” Day corrected grimly. “ There were a few days, young man, when it didn’t seem possible that you could come up to time.”

“ And suppose I hadn’t? ” Jack inquired.

"Then I honestly believe that Wade Winthrop would have postponed the whole event," Day told him. Jack's laugh was good to hear.

"I begin to see why Irene is in a state of frenzy," he responded. "I confess, Day, it hadn't occurred to me heretofore that the wedding couldn't go on without me."

"Don't be so conceited, Jack," Day warned him hastily. "It could go on, of course. The rest of us would have seen to that. Possibly even we could have imported Lord Axmuthy to take your place."

"He wouldn't," Jack interpolated. "Axmuthy never would demean himself by packing it into the space set apart for mere me."

"It?" Day queried.

"His self. How else could you express him, Day? It suits him to a T."

"You're jealous."

"Of?"

"Because you're not a British lordlet," she explained. "However, as Irene choked and had to be led away from the table, the only time she ever dined in his society, I hardly think he would consent to serve. Poor Sidney! I can't say that I envy her her prospective cousin. Isn't it about time he came over to get married?"

Jack yawned.

"Beg pardon," he said, in hasty apology. "For some obscure reason, Axmuthy always did make me drowsy. But I say, Day, your mind appears to run on weddings."

Day settled herself more cosily into her chair.

"Thank you so much for reminding me, Jack. I almost had forgotten. Now about Irene's letter: she wants to know if there's any doubt at all about your being able."

To her surprise, his colour came, and his eyes looked a little bit appealing. However, —

"Must I, Day?" was all he said.

"Why not?"

"Because —" He hesitated. Then he faced her honestly. "Because I've never done just that before, and — well, I'd a little rather not disgrace you."

"You couldn't," she answered tersely.

"Remember all the years I was out of that sort of thing," he reminded her.

"What if you were? That's ages over."

"Yes; but, since then, except in your vacations —" he protested stumbly.

There was a little pause. Then Day lifted her eyes and rested them on his eyes gravely.

"Jack," she said; "I wish you wouldn't distrust yourself, every now and then. It isn't fair to yourself; but it's a good deal more unfair to me. Do you suppose I'd have — have taken you for my adopted brother, if I had had any doubts about you? You ought to be as loyal to my judgment as I am to you." Her voice lagged a little on the words. Then she spoke more alertly. "As for your disgracing yourself or anybody else, that's all fudge, to quote Phil's elegant vocabulary. However, even if you did, it wouldn't be fair to Irene to back out, now that her plans are made. When Wade

came up to Quebec in July, they settled all the details, and you agreed to them."

"Yes." Jack spoke now with determination, crisply. "But that was before the row with Janet."

Day bit her lip.

"Jack," she burst out, after a minute; "does that nonsensical old fuss still hurt you?"

His colour came again.

"Yes, Day. It does."

And Day, as she thought backward, could not wonder.

It had been no slight storm which had broken in upon their peaceful summer. As all the Argyles' friends quite well understood, Mr. Argyle had taken his efficient secretary out of the command of a Pullman sleeping car. To the young secretary himself, and even to the Argyles, there had seemed nothing especially disgraceful in the fact, nothing to be concealed as criminal. Neither, drifting back to Quebec for a summer holiday, and finding one of his old associates down with enteric, had it seemed essentially disgraceful to Jack to spend a few of his idle weeks in the old uniform and among the duties of his old routine. The other man could ill afford a substitute. Jack was not sorry to have a chance to discover whether or not his more luxurious years had dwarfed him. He had waited only long enough to telephone to Mr. Argyle about his plan; then he had announced his intentions to the assembled household. Thence had arisen war, with Janet, British conservative and something of a snob withal, as leader of the opposi-

tion; while, in the Argyles' temporary absence, Amy Pope had been the first one to arise in Jack's defence.

The strife had been a bitter one; and, on Janet's part, it had sought outlet in hard and biting words. Jack had shut his teeth and gone his way, without effort to justify himself or to retaliate, and, in the end, Janet had capitulated, had confessed herself narrow and entirely in the wrong. To all seeming, the trouble had vanished out of sight completely and left no scar behind. And yet, locked up in Jack's innermost being, the hurt had remained, and, worse than the hurt, the little scar of self-distrust, of standing back and waiting to see how others would receive him.

Of all his friends, not one had been aware of this but Day; and she, believing in Jack's right to reticence, had never once spoken of the matter to him. Now that at last, however, he had broken silence, she nodded in swift comprehension.

"I was afraid it did," she said quietly, after a minute. "Perhaps it was rather bound to hurt, more than we any of us realized at the time. Still, it's all over with. Don't think about it, Jackie, any more than you can help. Things like that don't count so much, anyway, with us Americans. We don't get fussy over trifles. And Wade is one of the broadest-minded men I know."

"And Irene?"

"Another," Day said conclusively. "Now see here, Jack, Irene and I went all over this thing, while the fight was going on; and Irene told me then that, if it didn't all blow over and she couldn't have you both,

she should insist on Wade's asking you to usher, and leaving out Janet entirely."

"Honestly?" Jack was only human, after all, and his brown eyes showed his pleasure.

"Yes. I never meant to tell you; but, all in all, I thought I might as well. Mercifully, the need of such radical measures is all in the past. Still, you see you can't well be spared, at this late day."

"No," Jack assented. "No; I can't. I say, Day, I had no idea Irene was such a brick about things — Not that she would be called a brick from Janet's standpoint, though. However — But when's the day?"

"The Saturday after Thanksgiving; that is, if you are able."

Jack whistled.

"That's short shrift, Day. I'll do all I can, though. My rib will be all right for that sort of use, granted the wedding guests are peaceably inclined; but my ankle will be another question. For Rob's sake, I must get past the limping stage."

Day nodded, in quick comprehension.

"It would be better, if you could," she said.

"I must. However, there's the journey, too. It's one of those messy little trips, all changes, if I remember rightly. That will be worse than a dozen weddings. Still, I'll do my best. What's to-day?"

"The twenty-ninth."

"Hm! Twenty-four days on my back. That collie did great havoc, Day."

"And yet," she asked thoughtfully; "are you — it seems rather unsympathetic to ask; but are you altogether sorry?"

"Day," he answered, with another question; "do you remember just the wag of that old tail?" Then he came back to the subject in hand. "What is Irene's line-up?"

"Oh, for the wedding?" Day laughed at his phrase. "Sidney, of course, for maid of honour. That is on both their accounts. Then Amy and Janet and I, and Irene's sister, with you and Rob and Paul and a Winthrop cousin for the ushers. Coming out, Paul will look out for Janet, and you for Amy."

"And you?" Jack asked hastily.

"With Rob," Day answered him. "I'm used to catching step, you know. Besides, I'm always happiest when I'm with him," she added gently, as she rose to go.

And Jack, as he sat staring thoughtfully after her, felt it no wonder that Rob Argyle should be the happiest of boys.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IT was now early in November.

Lean little books, gold-lettered and bound in red or green, had become the order of the day, and every girl in all Smith College who owned a pocket, bought an odd volume of Shakespeare to fit it. The seniors did it that they might decide for which seven or eight out of all the parts they should make trial, while the girls of the lower classes followed their example, in order that they might discover, if they could, what all the pother was about.

All the pother, of course, was about senior dramatics, the choice of play and actors for the great event in June. Twice in each year, the college is rent in twain by hot discussions, once when the play is chosen, and again when it is given to its student audience on the Thursday night before commencement. Between these two epochs, the ardour cools a little, save in the case of the score or more of stage-struck students elected to fill the rôles. For them and, perhaps, too, for their intimates, the year is one of mental stress and strain, of conflicting jealousies and ambitions, of secretly digested downfalls of the pride, of honest endeavours, often wholly vain, to conceal elation over some unlooked-for elevation into prominence.

Moreover, all this strife is well worth the while. Class work must be kept up to the highest mark; else, the candidate for dramatic honours must give up her part. And, side by side with the routine work of the academic hour, there goes on a moral training which is of no slight help to the girls, once they are thrown into the scramble of the life beyond. A girl who can keep her head and shut her teeth behind her smiling lips when her chief ambition is disappointed, is sure to hold her own when the real emergency arises. The other girl, chosen apparently at random from the inconspicuous mob and given a place in the foremost rank of all things, does not always find it an easy lesson, the learning to hold to a modest unconcern. But the lesson, granted she does learn it well, far outweighs the gain she gets out of an infinite number of lectures upon social ethics. Moreover, all the time, this same score or two of girls is studying hard to get the fullest meaning out of some of the noblest lines that man has penned.

Of course, there is the other side: the politics, the inevitable bickering and jealousy, and the carping, petty criticism; but, like the outer side of a concave lens, it is more glitteringly conspicuous, but vastly smaller. Moreover, taken quite alone and by itself, it would count for nothing at all. It only gains importance, lying against the larger facts beyond.

However, very few of these arguments came into the fluffy heads of the seniors, in those busy days of autumn; not, at least, of those who had an active part in preparation for the play. They were too busy in more practical

directions. The play itself had been decided on in a class meeting held the Saturday after Mountain Day. There had been hot discussion, caustic argument; even, upon the part of one sentimental soul, the quoting of opinions recklessly given by outsiders in the course of private conversation. It had been Sidney's first experience of presiding over a storm centre which, at times, threatened to become cyclonic. Now and then, as she confessed later on to Day, she had had a wild desire to throw her gavel at the speaker, rather than trust to futile tappings on the table which neither stilled the tumult nor relieved her feelings in the very least.

Neither Day nor Amy, as it chanced, had been present at the meeting. That afternoon, for the first time, the doctors had announced that Jack was ready to receive calls, short ones; and Mrs. Pope, soon after luncheon, had driven out to the hospital, taking with her the two girls. Sidney, on the steps of the Tyler House, had looked after them with envious eyes.

"Be sure you give him my best love," she had called after the retreating car; "and tell him that nothing in the world but this horrid meeting would have kept me from going up there with you. I do think that the senior class ought to provide an understudy for its president."

"Jack will keep, though," Janet at her elbow made practical suggestion; "and this particular meeting won't."

Sidney turned on her a bit impatiently. Loyal as she was to the interests of her class, she could not forget

that her loyalty to Jack Blanchard was quite as great and had been of even longer standing.

"Jack came rather near to not keeping, the other day," she reminded Janet.

"Yes. And yet, after all, it was a little bit his fault," Janet answered, still with the unsentimental practicality which assailed her at times, and always left Sidney's blood at boiling point.

Now, without trusting herself to speak, Sidney turned away and started down the steps towards the class meeting.

Afterwards, she freed her mind about it all to Amy and Day. Janet could be exasperating now and then, they all agreed. The very worst of it all was, in her most exasperating moods it was wellnigh impossible to pick a flaw in her logic. All they could any of them do was to shut their tongues between their teeth and go away. At her best, Janet was a dear, witty and altogether charming. At her worst? It was Amy, who finally framed the word: *peskiferous*.

The discussion took place, that same evening, over in Amy's room. It was safer, all in all. Janet had a trick of appearing, unannounced, in Day's and Sidney's room; before this, she had walked in upon more than one analysis of her latest freak, an analysis which had lost itself in apologetic coughs, and ultra cordial greetings, and spasmodic queries as to the state of the weather out of doors. Janet had smiled inscrutably, while she had answered. She had been keen enough to know the meaning of the confusion of her hostesses. None

the less, she had stayed out her allotted time, and come again, next day. With friends so old as Sidney Stayre and the Argyles, Janet admitted their right to discuss and even to criticize. So long as they made no effort to prevent her going her ways in peace, they were welcome to talk her over all they chose. Janet Leslie was that rare type of girl who accepted it as a necessary fact that she would spend a large share of her life upon the edge of things. Deep down in the core of her heart lay a distinct, unchanging purpose to accomplish a given thing in a given way. The carrying out that purpose was leaving her time for little else in life, certainly not for the inevitable frittering away of energy that would result from any effort on her part to worm her way into the heart of things.

The purpose, strange to say, had taken shape during a random talk with Rob Argyle. A chance word of his, one day, had been the spark which had set fire to a long train of events which, Janet believed now, had been shaping itself since the beginning of the world. She could hear his voice now, see the scene that lay around them: the snow-heaped city street that cut athwart the battle lines where, just a century and a half before this present senior year of hers, two little armies had drawn up to fight an age-long enmity of nations to a finish. All her young life, Janet had lived close to that battleground; the bedtime stories of her earliest choice had concerned themselves with that long siege and final struggle which, fought within the compass of half a dozen city blocks, had modified the fate of half a world. Her

father's father and his uncle had been inkish in their tastes. Her own father, practical business man that he was, had chosen for his sole diversion the gathering up of battle lore. From her tiny childhood, Janet's mind had been filled with the theme; her imagination had been kindled with the facts that lay beneath her eyes. She had made up solitary little picnics underneath the tree near which Wolfe died; she had gone sliding in the path where his forlorn hope had climbed the heights; she had even gone to school less than a stone's throw from the place where the gallant Montcalm, shot to his heart, had fallen from his horse, and the echo of her steps, passing beneath the Louis Gate on her way home to luncheon, had timed themselves to the cadence of a woman's cry, "My General is killed."

And then, all of a sudden, Rob had inquired quite casually why she didn't write a history of it all; not then, but some day when she was grown up.

That night, Janet had lain awake and grasped her newborn resolution to her heart. Since then, she never once had let it go. It had brought her to college; to Smith College because, on American soil, she would gain more perspective for her final view of the matter. It had made her fling herself into her classroom work with an intensity unknown to girls who lack a single, absorbing purpose. It had dictated her choice of subjects: history, politics, logic, and above all, language, with just a dip into the chemistry which, she gravely asserted to her scoffing friends, had taught her the explosiveness of

mixing ill-assorted facts. It brought her Blue Pencil and Phi Kappa Psi; it brought her other honours, but it brought her singularly few close friends. Janet, realizing this fact, admitted its necessity. It took too much time to make many new friends. Instead of that, then, she would devote her slender leisure to keeping the old ones she already had. For that reason, the room of Sidney and of Day was one of the very few that she frequented.

Of course, she met their friends there, for Day and Sidney, sticking together like a pair of burrs, drew after them a good share of the class. Janet was on affable terms with many of the circle. She enjoyed them, while they were about; but she never went in search of them. They liked her; but their liking was modified by fear. Janet Leslie allowed her opinions and her purposes to be too well known, for her ever to attain real popularity. Moreover, she gave these other girls distinctly to understand that she liked them as Sidney's friends, or as Day's; not as her own.

Within this list came Amy Pope. To be sure, Amy had spent the previous summer under Janet's roof; but Janet had caused it to be clearly known that Amy was there as Day Argyle's guest. Earlier in the summer, they had gone their separate ways in peace. When the strife had come, they had been the leaders of the opposite sides. True, it had been a lecture, a sound moral drubbing, from Amy Pope which had brought the matter to an apparent crisis; but Janet's own conscience had forestalled the lecture, and, after outward peace had

been established between all the others, there had remained certain reservations between Janet and Amy.

Accordingly, in Amy's room the girls felt free from interruption, for thither Janet rarely penetrated. In fact, she rarely penetrated into the invitation house at all, choosing to regard it, not too justly, as a hotbed of pure snobbery and totally foreign to the ideals of a democratic institution such as Smith, an institution where a girl stood down on her own heels and firmly, not mounted on a tottering pedestal of ancestral bones and modern dollars. Theory, indeed, was Janet's strongest point. Not all her hours of messing, pinafores and smudgy-fingered, before the tables in the chemical laboratory had ever taught her the inherent danger of jumping to conclusions. This particular conclusion was in no wise modified by the fact that the leading member of one of the invitation houses, that same year, was a farmer's daughter from a village in the hills, a girl who wore cut-over frocks and earned her pennies before she spent them.

The house where Amy lived consisted of six double rooms, one of which had been held as a single, to provide for an occasional guest. It was a huge room on the southeast corner of the house, looking out upon the distant meadows and the twin low mountains beyond. There Amy Pope had ranged her varied household gods about her, the odd jumble of household gods, beautiful and frankly comic, that fall to the lot of any girl of exceeding popularity. There she held sway, and there she convened caucuses of all her friends, sometimes all

together, sometimes, as now, by twos and threes in turn. Just now, with the lights turned low, she and Sidney and Day and a heap of parti-coloured cushions lay in an inextricable tangle on the bed.

"I don't see why, after all these years, Janet does exasperate me so," Sidney remarked thoughtfully, at the ending of her story.

Amy laughed.

"Janet would ruffle the snow-white plumage of an angel," she said. "It's her little holier-than-thou air, I believe, that does it."

"And, after all," Day added; "I sometimes think she isn't half aware of it, herself."

"She is, then. You can see it in her eyes and in the way she sticks out her chin," Sidney contradicted. "I haven't lived with my own sister Phil, all these years, without being able to recognize the symptoms in advance. Moreover, when it comes to abusing Jack —"

"Janet never has appreciated Jack," Day murmured thoughtfully.

"So I observed, this last summer," Amy remarked. "Contrariwise, does he —"

"Yes," Day interrupted promptly. "Jack does. I think there isn't one of us, not even Rob, that gives Janet more credit for what she really, truly is."

"Well, I am not surprised." This time, it was Amy whose tone was thoughtful. "In some ways, Jack is a good deal broader than the rest of us."

Day smiled a little in the dark. It was her growing

notion that Jack would have been the first to cast Amy's epithet back upon her outspoken, loyal self.

Sidney broke the silence.

"How does he really seem to you, Day?"

"Splendid," she replied unhesitatingly. "Perfectly plucky, only a little worried about Daddy's needing him. He looks a little the worse for wear, though. Don't you remember how it was before? For any one so strong, it seemed as if he never, never would get over the shock of the accident, to say nothing of the rest. Of course, this isn't nearly as bad. Still, I think it will keep him here for a long while yet."

"Do you know," Amy Pope appeared to be meditating aloud; "I am not sure I should mind so very much."

"Jack might, though," Sidney suggested, when the hilarity had died down a little.

"If there weren't any aches attaching to it, of course I mean," Amy defended herself hastily. "Anyway, he was glad to see us this afternoon; and I mean he shall be twice glad, before he's through. At least, we can break up the monotony of things a little."

Day laughed again, as at some sudden recollection.

"By way of a parting offering, Amy tied a huge black pasteboard jumping-jack to the corner of his bed," she explained to Sidney. "Jack was charmed with it. He promptly named it *Axmuthy*; and, the last we saw of him, he was flapping it as if he'd been a five-year baby."

"Oh, dear! And I was out of it all," Sidney wailed a little enviously.

"No matter, dearie; you had the glories of your office," Day consoled her.

"Glories of a scrimmage!" There was disgust in Sidney's accent. "I never saw such a pack of girls in all my life. They didn't argue; they only squabbled. Then Agatha Gilbert stood up — she's fatter than ever, this fall — and mooned away about somebody or other." Sidney's voice rose to a mincing falsetto. "'You all know who I mean; to some of you she is very dear.' Somebody or other who wants us to do Browning."

"Not a bad idea for Agatha," Amy made flippant comment. "She'd come in strong on some of his runic utterances."

"She would; but she won't," Sidney replied, with vicious emphasis. "Her twaddle was the last straw. It broke the camel's back; but the camel died on the wrong side of the fence. As soon as she sat down, Helen called for the vote, and *Midsummer Night's Dream* swept everything before it."

"With Agatha as *Puck*?" Day queried irrepressibly.

Sidney gave a groan of horror at the idea.

"For goodness' sake, Day, don't project a thought, or whatever they call it, in that direction. It might blaze a trail for events to follow."

Amy lay back on her heap of pillows, her hands clasped on her breast.

"Leave it to me," she advised them smugly. "I

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am the present power behind the throne, and I can breathe low words into the coachly ear."

"You came most dangerously near not being any kind of a power," Sidney reminded her unkindly. "It took all sorts of fighting to railroad you in."

"No matter," Amy made tranquil response. "If I hadn't been chairman, I could have been *Titania*. I have just the build for that."

"*Titania* wasn't an Amazon," Day assured her. "With your dimensions, Amy, the audience would have been in agonies of fear lest you might accidentally step on one of your attendant fairies and obliterate her completely."

Amy lifted her head to look down at her long, slim foot.

"I'd have been very careful," she said meekly. "However, histrionic triumphs are denied to me. I can only toil for the glories of the others."


"And the class," Day added.

"Yes." The mockery died out of Amy's tone completely. "Yes, and the class."

Sidney, however, took the matter less sentimentally.

"Yes, and incidentally get the real honour of the whole thing. Amy, I can't tell you how glad I am you have it. There isn't another girl in all the class who would do it one half so well."

And Day echoed her words without a spark of envy. She shared to the full Sidney's estimate of Amy; shared, too, Sidney's belief that she herself was cast in too



gentle a mould to meet the ceaseless petty opposition and criticism which was bound of necessity to assail the chairman of dramatics.

Amy, listening to their honest praise, was too intent upon deserving it to waste a thought upon conventional remonstrance. Few honours within the gift of the class seemed to her so desirable as did this very chairmanship, involving, as it did, the oversight of every least detail concerning the commencement play which was to be the consummating glory of their college course, the greatest memory they would leave behind them. In spite of Sidney's random words, spoken weeks beforehand, it never once had occurred to Amy that her class would deem her worthy of such honour, strong for such responsibilities, impartial for such decisions as those that lay before her. She had started for the hospital, that afternoon, too eager to see her invalided friend to bestow more than a passing thought upon the meeting. It never once had struck her that, for her, the meeting was to be of any especial interest, beyond the interest that every loyal senior feels regarding the choice for the class play. She had been sitting at Jack's side, chattering gayly, when an orderly had brought a message that she was wanted at the telephone. She had risen with a protesting sigh, and gone away. When she came back again, a little later, her eyes were shining and her cheeks were flushed; but she had vouchsafed no explanation of the message until, at her mother's side, she was driving home. Strange to say, even then, there was no elation in her manner,

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but rather a stiffening of all her moral fibre, to meet the new strain laid upon it.

Both the girls felt this, Day, perhaps, even more than Sidney, felt it no less in her silence than in the unaccustomed quiver in her voice, as she said at last, —

“Girls, thank you. I do appreciate it, even if I don’t say a lot of gushy things about it. It’s a tremendous honour, and one I don’t deserve. My only fear is that I’m not large enough to fill the place; but you can count on it that I shall do the very best I can.” She held out her two hands to grip their hands in token of her promise. Then she steadied herself abruptly, a little abashed by her own unwonted showing of emotion. “Now,” she added briskly; “do let’s talk over things a little, and see where our best material is going to lie.” And, just a moment later, the three girls were discussing the coming campaign in good earnest.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WITH scant regard for convalescent nerves, Day dashed into the sun-room of the hospital.

"This," she proclaimed, as soon as she was in speaking distance of the chair where Jack, now looking quite his normal self once more, was buried in the *Times*; "this is what it is to have a railroad father."

Jack vouchsafed her no greeting other than a nod. The quality of the nod, however, made it quite sufficient.

"What now?" he inquired, as Day cast herself into the nearest chair and pulled a letter out of her coat pocket.

"Daddy to the rescue, of course," she answered gayly. "I wrote him about the way the doctor wagged his head and looked solemn over your going out to the wedding. I judge, from all accounts, that Rob wrote him, too. Anyway, he says — Oh, dear me, where is it? All this is about our trip home, to-morrow. He sends the *Aurora* up on a night train, and we're to go down at noon," Day interpolated swiftly. "Now let me see! Here 'tis." And she read from the letter in her hand.

"From all accounts, there appears to be a little risk about Jack's going West so soon. I interviewed Win-

throp, last night, and he seemed to regard Jack as an indispensable factor of the function, so we came to the conclusion that you'd better, all you youngsters and your mother, pile into the *Aurora*, and make the trip in some sort of comfort. It will be the safest plan for Jack, and you must see to it that he has all the room he needs, and all the time for rest. The others of you can pack yourselves in after a fashion, or the boys can have a section in another car. Will you tell Miss Pope? I've wired Rob to write to young Addison, and I'll arrange at once about the transportation of the car."

"There!" Day drew a long breath and leaned back in her chair, while she folded up her letter. "Daddy is a comfort; and, this time, he has taken a weight off my soul. I knew you oughtn't to think of going, otherwise; and I was afraid Irene would balk at the very steps of the altar, if you weren't there with all the rest of us."

"Day," Jack asked her, after a little silence which betrayed how far from strong he was, even now; "do you realize how good to me your father is?"

Day looked him in the eye, as she made counter question.

"Why shouldn't he be, Jack?" she asked fearlessly, for all the world was well aware by now that, without the constant support of his efficient secretary, no man, not even John Argyle himself, could ever meet the growing demands laid on him as president of the vast railway system stretching from sea to sea.

Whatever his indebtedness, however, John Argyle

realized it to the full. Even Rob Argyle, his only son and his idol, was hardly dearer to him than was this same secretary, come to him by chance and out of nowhere in particular, and grown to be almost his second self. It was three or four years now since Jack had become an inmate of the Argyle home, a sharer in most of the family plans. Accordingly, it seemed to Mr. Argyle the most natural thing in the world, when Jack's recent convalescence made dangerous a journey of many changes, that he should detail for Jack's especial use his own private car, *Aurora*.

"I always did love to do things in state," Amy Pope sighed contentedly, three weeks afterward.

Jack laughed at the serenity of Amy's face and voice.

"This ought to meet your requirements, ma'am," he assured her, as he stooped to pick up the magazine fallen at her feet.

"It does. It always has been my one regret that my family went in for law, instead of railroads," Amy confessed. "Thank you, no. I decline to read that magazine. I can read in any ordinary car. Now I wish to meditate upon my especial glories, for they may never descend on me again."

"After all, it's not so very different," Jack said thoughtfully.

"After all, it is, then!" she retorted. "You have been pampered for so long that you don't know about the other thing."

"I did once," he reminded her.

"Of course. But that was a good while ago. You

don't seem to realize that I was never in a private car before in all my life." She surveyed with contented eyes the sumptuous simplicity of the interior. "This is no more like a normal Pullman than Macy's jewelry counter is like Tiffany." Once more she glanced up and down the car. "Even the porter looks different," she remarked. "He's a shade blacker and infinitely more shiny. I wonder if they have a polish for their skins, these more impressive porters."

"We used to take it turn and turn about," Jack assured her gravely. "When Norman was with me, he polished my boots, and I shined up his face."

Amy cast a glance of mock terror over her shoulder.

"Hush!" she warned him melodramatically. "Janet might hear."

"I'd best be careful, then," Jack answered in the same exaggerated tone. "She might be so shocked at the discovery that she'd get off at the next station and start back home again."

"Do private cars have stations?" Amy asked discursively. "I thought that they kept going."

"And let the train catch up with them, when they came along?" There was no need now for Jack to pretend to any extra mirth.

"You shall not laugh at me; it isn't fair," she protested. "As I say, this is my first trip in such state as this, and I have to get used to it by degrees. But really, Jack, there is a certain glory in being of railroad extraction; one gets so many privileges, and they all are such showy ones. My grandfather and all my

uncles are lawyers, good ones, they say; but that doesn't give them the right to motor up and down the country in a specially-begilded courtroom of their own."

"No." Jack's tone was just a little thoughtful. "And all railroad men don't own a private car. The country doesn't hold so many John Argyles."

"Will Rob be another?" Amy seemed putting the question to herself, and it was she herself who answered, "I doubt it."

"Why?" The question was curt.

Amy liked its curtness, considering the cause.

"Can you fancy Rob in a place like that?" she demanded.

"I can. Under his fun, he's like a bit of nickeled steel, lighter than the old kind, but more unbreakable. Give Rob his chance, and he will go to any lengths. What's more, when he gets there, he'll make good," Jack assured her, in a burst of prophecy whose truth the later years fulfilled.

Amy nodded.

"Perhaps. And Day is like him. You don't know, Jack Blanchard, what that girl has counted for, in the class."

"No. I can imagine." The answer came in two deliberate sentences.

"You can't, then. No boy can. You can't know the chances that come to her, the chances she sees, when most of us girls are as blind to them as bats. We mean well; but it is Day who does it. Ask the girls who have to grind along, best way they can, that have to make

nothing do the work of every single sort of something. Day doesn't spend a tenth of her allowance on herself; but that's the least of what she does. She knows what the girls want, and she has a perfect intelligence office of a mind, always matching up the needs and the needs — ”

“ Meaning bread? ” Rob queried, as, unnoticed by either of the others, he sauntered up the car and dropped down on the arm of Jack's chair.

“ No; Day,” Amy told him frankly.

He ignored all sentimental phases of the question.

“ I always had supposed that kneading was an all-night job,” he responded. “ Our cook used to make no end of a row about it, just when I wanted to get sleepy. You'd have said she went at it with a pile driver, for the very least. How do you find your nerves and busted bones, Jack, now we are really under way? ”

“ Safe so far.”

“ That's good. I only thought, if you'd like to go beddy-by, I'd take Amy off your hands. As long as that isn't necessary, what do you say to an endurance race down the car, to see which of us can go farthest, without limping? We can have Janet for judge, you know. She can be counted on to tell us the truth, regardless of our feelings.” Rob settled himself more firmly on his chair-arm, with every manifestation of intent to stay.

“ Mahogany is fairly tough; but I know you weigh at least two hundred,” Amy warned him practically.

“ Less eight and a tenth. I am growing peaked from

too much study. However, as long as it's Dad's car, not mine, I think I'll risk this perch a little longer. It looks more coy, and I want to impress Day and Sidney with the fact that I went off because I was so bored."

"What bored you?"

"Pale pink clothes, and whether the roses ought to be carried overhand or under," Rob responded. "By good rights, you ought to be there, to take part in the discussion. No; don't go. I really think that they can put it through, themselves."

"I haven't the slightest intention of going," Amy reassured him tranquilly. "I am entertaining Jack."

"Oh!" Rob's tone spoke volumes. "And I thought he was looking a little — Never mind. But, Amy, would you be willing to tell me what constitutes a shower bouquet? Is it made of snowdrops, or does it just simply leak on its own account, irrespective of material?"

Amy laughed.

"Sometimes it does leak, when you least expect it," she explained.

"So do most things, my appetite included." Rob pulled out his watch. "Isn't it about time that porter chap was giving us some dinner? Jack this is your party. Suppose you ring him up and see?"

Amy craned her neck to see the dial of his watch.

"Nonsense, Rob! It's only half past five."

"What difference? Besides, my inner man is proclaiming that it's half past time for dinner, and he

ought to know. What time do we get to somewhere in the morning, Jack?"

"Ask me, do!" Amy adjured him. "I feel so important, because I know. We get to Chicago at five-thirty, and we get There at ten. I know, because Day told me all about it, and she spelled *There* with a capital, just the way I did."

"That's a beastly slow schedule," Rob objected.

"I know about that, too," Amy continued explanation. "It is a slow train. That is partly because limiteds do not, as a rule, carry private cars hung on behind, and partly because it would be better for our interest'ing invalid," she shot a mocking glance at Jack; "to have the excitement of the start well over with by bedtime."

"Confound it all, Amy! I'm no invalid," Jack protested.

But Amy's answer was conclusive.

"Oh, yes, you are. Else, I wouldn't be giving up my own good time, for the sake of entertaining you."

"Sacrifice suits you, then," Jack made elaborate reply. "You are doing it extremely well."

But already Amy had digressed again. Her own contentment rendered her discursive, gossipful.

"What is Janet's present frame of mind?" she queried, in a tone, however, that took all trace of malice from her words.

"Serenity itself. Behold!" Rob nodded sidewise towards the further corner of the car where, half buried in their great chairs, Paul and Janet were deep in con-

versation. "Paul is a host in himself, when it comes to keeping Janet comf'y in her mind. He always was."

"She appears to have taken him back into full favour, as if nothing had ever gone wrong," Amy remarked, after a prolonged study of the little group of two.

"It was largely Paul's doing, I suspect. He has a trick of marching up to her and insisting on being chums, whether she will or not," Rob explained. "He shows such cheery unconcern over all her tempers, that I suspect she has decided she may as well save up her fighting for those of us who mind it more."

"Like Jack?" Again Amy's glance, full of merry mockery, fell upon Jack.

To her surprise, he failed to meet her mood.

"I do care," he confessed. "Care lots."

"What's the use?" Rob asked him indolently.

"None."

"Then — why?"

"Because I can't help myself," Jack confessed, a second time.

"Really, it isn't worth the while," Amy advised him.

"Janet's peskiness is only just skin deep."

"It goes deeper than that with you; eh, Jack?" Rob queried. "I'm not so sure that I wonder. I had a touch of it, one time, myself. However, she has taken you back into full favour now; hasn't she?"

"Ye-es." Jack hesitated. "Only I suspect the favour, like what Amy terms the *peskiness*, is just about skin deep."

"I like the word," Amy defended herself promptly. "It is early Saxon, and it tells its story without mincing matters. As for Janet, Jack, I'm not too sorry. Now and then there is a sort of comfort in having a comrade in misfortune."

"And yet," Rob made sudden protest; "with all her small — ahem! — peccadillos, I like Janet. She's smart as a steel trap, and, once you learn how to manage her, she's not so very cranky."

"I like her, too," Jack said meditatively. "The only trouble is that Janet appears not to return the compliment. She is faultlessly polite, when I'm about; but she never makes the slightest effort to come inside my radius."

"That is because she doesn't feel the responsibility of entertaining the interest'ing invalid," Amy observed, with an ostentatious yawn. "For my part, I like Janet, too; but I must confess that I generally prefer to observe her actions from the other end of our environment. I think, Jack, if you really do not mind too much, I shall assume the entertainment of the interest'ing invalid as my own especial care. From all accounts, there is a safety in your radius that is lacking elsewhere."

And assume his entertainment Amy did, not only throughout the evening, but throughout the trip. Moreover, she assumed it so well that not only was Jack alternately delighted and convulsed by her efforts, but their gay duet, wherever it might be, became the central point of fun for all the group. Amy Pope was something of a genius in her way. Her genius, though,

had never been so manifest as now, when she brought to bear upon the stalwart young Canadian her whimsical determination to treat him as an interesting invalid, and to defer to him and make much of him accordingly. The whim endured through all the journeys to and from the wedding, through all the dainty bustle and confusion of the houseparty they found awaiting them. Just once it broke, however, broke for a short half hour just after the venerable bishop had pronounced Wade Winthrop and Irene Jessup man and wife.

It had been a pretty wedding, all pink and green with palms and roses, with the rosy frocks of the bridesmaids and with Sidney's gown of palest, palest green; pretty, and not without the little pomp which should accompany the crowning moments of a woman's life. There had been a choir hidden away behind the palms, to sing the Bridal Chorus, as Irene, beneath her filmy veil, her grandmother's veil and of rare old point, came slowly up the aisle. There had been a pair of scarlet-hooded rectors, pompous as pouter pigeons, and there had been the white-haired bishop waiting to speak the final consummating words. Then the slow line went down the aisle once more, Wade and Irene Winthrop leading the way, their promises fulfilled, and, coming after them, the others, their promises as yet to be. And people, watching, smiled as they passed by, smiled and demanded of each other, "Which? And when?"

Afterwards, their congratulations spoken, Amy and Jack drew aside a little from the thickest of the confusion at the house. It was Amy's doing, for Jack all

along had protested stoutly that he was now as well as ever and as strong. Amy had her doubts, however. She had felt the little drag of his ankle, as he had followed her into the carriage; and, in the glare of light that faced them at the house, she had seen the vertical lines between Jack's level brows. Accordingly, she fibbed, fibbed promptly and in a hearty, wholesale fashion that filled her companion with amusement.

"Jack," she said; "I'm abominably tired, after all this fuss. We aren't needed here, with all the others. Do take me to some bright little isle of our own, while I catch my breath and think up a few lucid things to say."

For a moment, he stood smiling into the eyes of the tall girl beside him; and, as he stood there, Amy was conscious of a thrill of pride in her escort. In face and bearing, in dignity and ease of manner, Jack seemed, even to her critical young eyes, the equal of any man there present, the equal even of Rob himself. Jack, watching her intently, read something of the satisfaction in her eyes; and, yielding to a sudden mood, he asked her, —

"What is it, Amy? Am I passing muster?"

Her answer surprised them both by its earnest swiftness, —

"Yes, Jack. You always do."

When Paul came dashing in upon them, a half hour later, to warn them it was time to cut the bridal cake, he discovered them settled in two arm chairs beside the table in the deserted library. Between Amy's

round bare arms was outspread a map of the Transvaal, with one of her long pink gloves marking an imaginary line of march. Beside her, wholly heedless of the shoulders of his new coat, Jack sat with his chin resting on his interlocked fingers, while, with his brown eyes upon her changing face, he told over to her the story of those last weeks of the war, weeks when men dropped like flies, weeks of weariness and suffering and alarm, monotonous days in hospital, and days whose monotony was shattered by the "drives" planned by the master brain of the British Army. Then, that part of the story done, he told her of that final day of all, the day when, war ended, his medal earned, his passage bought for home, the word had come to him that his father, dying suddenly, had left his mother penniless.

It was all a story that Jack had told but rarely. Once, in the despondent mood born of a homesick birthday, he had told it all to Sidney. Once, in a long day of stormbound inactivity, he had told it over to Rob Argyle, merely to rouse Rob from the thought of his own alarms. Even Day had never heard it all from Jack's own lips. So it was not altogether strange that Amy Pope, knowing full well Jack's customary reticence, swept out of all self-consciousness by listening to the tale so simply told, should look up to meet Paul's eager hail with eyes that were quite wide and wet.

Ten minutes later, though, her merry, witty wish to Irene from above the wedding cake came as a climax to all the gayety which had gone before.

CHAPTER NINE

“SIDNEY,” Day inquired abruptly, one stormy afternoon; “what sort of a time up here do you think Phil is really and truly having?”

A moment earlier, Sidney had been laughing at Day’s efforts to reconcile her umbrella handle with the brace of bundles she was endeavouring to carry in the same hand. Now her face grew grave at the unexpected question.

“Day, really and truly I don’t know,” she told her friend.

“Doesn’t she tell you things? I thought she did, nowadays.”

“Some things — sometimes. It isn’t easy, though, to get Phil into a confidential mood.”

“Not exactly.” Day’s answering tone was a good deal more dry than she intended.

Sidney looked up from beneath her own streaming umbrella.

“Day, you don’t like Phil,” she said flatly.

And Day made answer no less flatly, —

“No; I don’t. However, that’s no reason I want her to lose all the fun up here.”

Then a car came along, and Day, despairing for the



"Sidney looked up from beneath her own streaming umbrella."
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safety of her bundles, proposed that they should take it. Of necessity, then, the conversation dropped. Later, that same evening, Day picked it up once more.

"Sidney?"

"Yes?" Sidney's tone was vague, for her eyes were still bent upon the pages of her book.

"I want to talk. Put up your work and pay attention."

"What do you want to talk about?"

"Phil."

Sidney tossed her book aside.

"What's the use?" she asked a little wearily. "Isn't it enough for me to worry?"

Day frowned; not at Sidney, however, but at the subject.

"Worry never does any good," she said.

"No; perhaps not. However, if you were responsible for Phil —"

"You aren't," Day interposed with some haste.

"Yes, I am, after a fashion. One always is a little bit responsible for the people that one loves."

Day's next question was as unorthodox as it was unexpected.

"Sidney, for an honest fact, do you really love Phil, love her as — as I do Rob?"

The question proved a poser. Without its final clause, Sidney would have given it an unqualified assent. Day's love for Rob, though, as she well knew, far overpassed the limits usually set for sisterly affection. Sidney pondered. Then, —

"I do love Phil, Day, love her very much. I could love her even better, though, if she'd let me."

The answer sufficed. Sidney's tone left no doubt of its sincerity; and, long since, the two girls had dismissed from their talks together all conventional expressions of opinion that they did not feel. Day attacked a new corner of the subject.

"Has it ever occurred to you that Phil is missing Wade more than she cares to have us know?"

"I am sure she is." Sidney's answer came promptly. "Wade has been lovely to her, all through his engagement; but of course it made a difference. It was bound to. And Phil does love dearly to be first."

"Don't we all?" Day made thoughtful query.

"Yes, only some of us have more ways of working towards it. Wade was the centre of Phil's solar system, and it was hard for the child, when Irene came up on the — the horizon."

"You might have said the zenith," Day suggested, with sudden flippancy. "It wouldn't have stretched the truth at all, and it would have been a good deal less hackneyed. But, to return to our little lambs, I meant to imply that it was Wade's influence, not his self, that Phil was missing."

"She misses both," Sidney assented, her thoughtful eyes on the rug at her feet.

"Naturally. You can't well split them, I suppose." Day appeared to be thinking aloud. "And yet, after all, you can. Being with Wade kept her happy; but, even when he wasn't around, things he had said to

her did seem to make her gentler, a little bit less — crabbed.”

Sidney sighed.

“Day, I truly do try,” she burst out at length. “I don’t have that child off my mind for one single, solitary minute.”

“It’s a shame,” Day murmured, in a sympathetic aside addressed to no one in particular.

“It’s a shame to me,” Sidney answered, with some spirit. “Phil’s own older sister ought to have as much influence over her as a man cousin; but I can’t seem to find out how to get it, in the first place. In her dumb way, I think she likes me. Once in a while, a very great while, she even talks to me a little. I try to make the most of it; but I can’t seem to get her to do it very often.”

“Does she ever do it of her own accord?” Day persisted, as one who was seeking foundation for scientific investigation, to be carried on at her future leisure.

“Once or twice she has.”

“And?” Day held her question suspended in mid-air.

In spite of her really serious interest in their discussion, Sidney laughed outright.

“And it has astonished me so that I’ve stood and stared at her, with my mouth wide open, and never said a word.”

Day’s answering laugh was infectious in its mirth.

“No wonder she hasn’t been moved to repeat the experiment too often, Sidney!”

"I know it," Sidney made humble confession. "I do make such fearful blunders always, when it's a case of Phyllis, Day. I can't ever seem to understand her, no matter how I try."

Day again addressed the opposite wall.

"No especial wonder," she made comment.

"Has it ever struck you," Sidney asked, after a meditative pause; "that Phil never gets on with girls?"

"Some girls, yes. It has struck me often and very hard," Day assented, with a chuckle.

But Sidney ignored the chuckle.

"I don't mean any especial girl; but just girls as a class. Boys — men, rather — she gets on better with."

"I love your rhetoric," Day interpolated.

"Never mind the rhetoric. I'm after the fact. Phil never showed herself out to me one half as much as she has done to Wade. Down in her secret heart, she adores Jack, though she'd rather die a dozen deaths than let him know it. Moreover, from all accounts, she and Paul were chums at sight."

"Funny; wasn't it? I couldn't exactly understand that combination. But Phil has always fought with Rob."

"Because he would persist in taking her as a joke, and she knew it," Sidney answered. "Phil's one great ambition in life is to be taken very much in earnest."

"Don't you suppose she ever sees the funny side of herself?" Day queried.

"Never."

Day rumbled her hair against the chairback until it rose, a skewy aureole, about her happy face.

"What a shame for her to miss so much!" she observed pityingly. "If she were only some other person, she'd revel in her own eccentricities. Don't you think she even gets the fun of taking in the combination of herself and the frilly Marguerite Veronica?"

"Never," Sidney iterated.

"Too bad! A sense of humour is such a solace. But really, Sidney," Day sat up and attacked the question with fresh zeal; "all those last months before we came to college, after Jack was burned, Phil seemed like a different creature. She looked different, too. She seemed to have a notion that some things were less unbecoming than some others; she even laughed a little once in a while, and she didn't consider it at all a disgrace to let Jack know she cared about him and had been a little anxious about his getting well."

"I know. I remember." Sidney spoke briefly.

"And I thought it was going to last."

"So did I."

"And it hasn't."

"No."

"Then," Day spoke with a bravery which, at heart, she was far from feeling; "then we must go to work to get it back again."

"How?"

"I don't know," Day confessed frankly. "Of course, it's something that we know it's there, shut up inside

her. We have so much to build upon. How to get it out again is a different matter."

"So I've discovered," Sidney burst out, and now there was a ring of desperation in her tone. "Phil's end and aim in life is to appear exactly the one thing that she isn't. At heart, she's not a termagant at all. She's sensitive and easily hurt, and she'd fight for her friends till — till she dropped, fighting."

"And when they picked her up, she'd turn on them and fight them, too," Day added. "Sidney, there's no denying it that Phil is a problem."

Then silence fell upon the room.

Day broke the silence.

"But what I'm grudging," she said slowly; "is her losing all the good she might get out of college."

"The loss is her own, though," Sidney said soberly.

"Not altogether. Some of it comes back on Wade and your father. They sent her here. They didn't do it haphazard, either; they had a definite notion of what it ought to do for Phil; and they are going to be wofully disappointed, when it doesn't do it." Day sat leaning forward, her chin on her fists. "I grudge it, Sidney; it all seems such a lot of wasted energy," she repeated.

"I know. But what can I do?"

Day rose abruptly, crossed the room to seat herself on the arm of Sidney's chair.

"It isn't you, Sidney, and I'm a selfish beast to throw my worry over on you," she said remorsefully, as she flung her arm across her friend's shoulders, then drew

it tight. "In fact, I rather think I have been a little selfish, all along. I've washed my hands of Phil entirely, and left you to manage her as best you could. There's no use denying that the child will have to be managed. She's no fit subject for self-government; she's as crazy as a junior voting for caps and gowns, bent on self-destruction, and consequent endless repinings after it's too late. Really, did you know those juniors went through the annual farce, to-day? When do you suppose the idea will ever trickle backwards down the classes that, by the time we're seniors, we loathe the very mention of a cap and gown? But about Phyllis: Sidney, I think I've been a conscienceless pig, the way I've left her to go her ways alone."

"But she isn't your sister," Sidney reminded her.

Day's reply came without hesitation.

"No; but she's yours, and you are my one best girl friend, and your worries ought, by good rights, to be mine. Sidney Stayre, without you —" She checked herself, save for the tightening of her arm on Sidney's shoulders, and, for a little while, there was silence. When Day spoke again, her voice was lower. "And, just because college has done so much for me, Sidney, now that I'm getting ready to leave it all behind and go away, the least thing I can do will be to pass it on to some other girl who needs it just as I have done, and there isn't another girl I know who needs it more than Phil does."

"Yes," Sidney assented. "If only —"

But Day interrupted.

"She will, Sidney; that is, if I do my part. Else, what's the use of us girls whose lives are simply crammed with happiness?"

A day or two afterwards, Day said some of this to Amy Pope. Amy, however, frankly funk'd the situation.

"It is a noble thought, Day, and it does you proud. I admire your theories and your reformatory zeal; but I can't take up my hoe and go to digging up the moral weeds in Phil. I've troubles enough on my own account just now."

"What now?"

"Agatha Gilbert!" Amy muttered darkly. "She's always *nowing* about something or other."

Day laughed unfeelingly.

"It's your turn, Amy. I toiled over her, all freshman year. She had the greatest inabilities of anybody in the class, and she poked her feet up the steps of every possible position, from basket ball to S. C. A. C. W., and the class treasury."

"She'd have been safe there; she's too slow to do any embezzling," Amy grumbled. "A treasurer who counts on her fingers is likely to be kept too busy to get into trouble on her own behalf. I wish I'd known her aspirations before this year's elections. I would have guaranteed to keep her out of further mischief."

"You poor old dear! What is it now?" Day asked soothingly, for in truth Amy did look distinctly worried.

The worry came out in a positive gulp of woe.

"She's going to try for *Puck*!"

"For *Puck*!"

"Yes, for *Puck*. And she has the architecture of a feather bolster."

"What if she does? She'll never make it."

"I know that," Amy retorted grimly. "But think of the disgrace to all the class that none of us have been able to suppress her!"

Late that same afternoon, when Sidney and Day were just preparing to dress for dinner, Janet burst in upon them with confirmation of the tidings.

"Girls! Girls! Girrrlls!" she demanded breathlessly. "Have you heard the last sensation at the Hatfield House?"

Sidney shook her head. For the moment, certain facts of class politics had downed even the great questions of dramatics.

"You haven't heard? A great president you are!" Janet scoffed. "And this is news, too, great, fat news. Agatha Gilbert —"

"Is trying for *Puck*." Day completed Janet's sentence for her.

Janet's face fell.

"Then you had heard," she said a little bit reproachfully.

"Amy told us, this morning."

"What did Amy say?" Janet demanded.

"She didn't. She was speechless with disgust."

"Disgust!" Janet, in her excitement, had been roaming up and down the room; but now she paused to face Day, a world of hilarity in her dark eyes. "I

think it is the best fun I ever heard or saw. Agatha Gilbert is fat, Day, soft fat, and slower than a tired-out turtle. She looks like one, too." Janet gave a nervous little giggle. It was plain that the spirit of dramatics had fallen upon her soul.

Day read the mood aright.

"You've just been over, having trials, your own self," she challenged her friend.

Janet nodded.

"Yes. How did you know?"

"I saw you, the night after you did *Madame Champlain*, last summer; I recognize the symptoms. Moreover, I suspect that they applauded. Did they?"

"A little."

"Good child! Make them applaud some more. What parts are you trying?"

"Just *Hippolyta*, and *Hermia*, and *Helena*," Janet made comprehensive answer.

Sidney, brush in hand, spun around from the mirror.

"Good gracious, child! Do you mean to corner it all, yourself?" she demanded.

"No; it's only just as well to have some extra bow-strings in your pocket," Janet answered. "The girls all say so. Besides, these are the only ones that are in my line. I'm too little to be a man, and too — too down on my heels to be a tripping fairy. They're futile, anyway."

"Take care!" Day warned her. "I expect to be a fairy."

"*Titania*, then," Janet answered.

"Me? No; I'm too big, and I can't act enough. I only aim to be just a plain, garden variety of fairy. I want to be in the thing," Day told her frankly; "and I ought to get as much as that out of my dancing and my having been freshman president."

"You ought to get a whole lot more," Janet mutinied.

"I ought to; but I sha'n't. Moreover, I think I won't waste my time in trying. It will be all I can do to support Sidney and Amy in their hours of greatness," Day said, with a good-natured finality which was intended once for all to bury Janet's suspicions of her own desire for stage success.

"You really don't want *Titania*? I think you'd stand a chance for it," Janet urged her. "Even if you are a little bit too tall, you're so light on your feet that no one would ever think about anything else."

Day shook her head.

"No *Titania* for me. I'd be worse than Agatha as *Puck*."

Janet gasped and gurgled, as once more her mirth assailed her.

"You couldn't be! No boards would hold you. Agatha herself needs especial planking. Girls, you must see her doing it!"

"Have you?"

"Yes, just this afternoon."

"When? How?" Sidney flung down her brush and joined Day in the window-seat.

"Marjorie Glenn is in Fifteen Washburn, you know, and she asked me over. She and her roommate have been

having theatre parties for a week, it seems. They get back in the room, and watch Agatha with opera glasses. The windows are just opposite, and one gets a splendid view. Oh, but it is funny, funny! This is the way she does it. Look!" And Janet darted across the room, snatched up a handful of pillows, deftly lashed them to her person by means of the long crape scarf that lay upon Day's bed, and then came solemnly striding forward towards an imaginary row of footlights. Just within the imaginary row, she halted, lifted herself upon one toe and then the other, cut a pigeon-wing, deliberate and elephantine, and then made sonorous proclamation,

"The king doth keep his revels here to-night;
Take heed the queen come not within his sight,
For Oberon is passing fell and wrath."

"I should think he might be," Day said, as she wiped her eyes. "Janet, your place is on the vaudeville stage, doing impersonations."

"Of the great?" Janet queried composedly. "Agatha Gilbert should come under that head. She weighs as much as Jack Blanchard, any day." Then, swiftly as she had donned them, she tossed aside the scarf and pillows and went leaping down the floor, laughing and capering like the maddest, merriest *Puck* conceivable, flung a handspring forward, sidewise, and came up to face them with a little elfish crow of laughter. An instant later, she was swaying slightly, lightly as a bit of thistle down, in time to the lilt of *Puck's* gay lines.

“Up and down, up and down,
I will lead them up and down;
I am fear'd in field and town;
Goblin, lead them up and down.”

Dancing lightly backwards to the door, she flung another handspring, gave another little crow of laughter, and then, before either of her audience could rally to their senses and applaud, she had turned demurely and walked off out of the room.

A pause, utter, eloquent, followed on the heels of her departure. Then Day turned to Sidney.

“You’re going to Amy’s room with me, directly after supper,” she ordained.

“Why Amy?”

“To tell her that she must insist upon it,” Day’s voice was excited, eager, earnest; “must insist upon it without fail that Janet Leslie tries for *Puck*.”

“There’s no question of her getting it, if she does try,” Sidney assented.

Without wasting more time in idle reckoning up the chances, both girls fell to work at their belated toilets. In the midst of hooking up her belt, though, Day lifted up her voice.

“*Hippolyta!* Bah!” she said.

And, meanwhile, Janet Leslie had gone her way, without the slightest notion of the enthusiasm that she had created.

CHAPTER TEN

“COME in!”

Phyllis spoke like an aggrieved Amazon. To be sure, there was some reason for her dismal sternness. She had made an ignominious failure of her history recitation, that morning, a failure born of the self-consciousness evoked by her having overheard a whisper distinctly not meant for her ear. There had been ice-cream for dinner, too; and Phyllis detested ice-cream and disdained noon dinners. Moreover, as a last, worst ill, Marguerite Veronica, in a swishy silk petticoat, had undertaken to change the hanging of all the pictures in the room, just at the hour when Phyllis had settled to a long-delayed letter to her mother. And moreover again, it was raining furiously outside, and fast converting the ice on Paradise into an unseemly lake of slush, and skating was the one outdoor sport which Phyllis deemed worthy of her size and dignity. Strange to say, she skated extremely well.

“Come — in!” The accent of her repetition betrayed the fact that Phyllis was fast becoming exasperated by the delayed obedience to her summons.

Weeks before this time, the entire household had learned that Phyllis Stayre, exasperated, was a force to be reckoned with. Accordingly, it was no wonder

that the maid's face, appearing in the crack of the opening door, showed that she felt deprecating.

"There's a caller for you downstairs, Miss Stayre," she said.

"What!" Phyllis received the information incredulously, much as if a caller were a new and unpleasant sort of bug.

"A caller. A young man." The maid's voice suddenly lost its deprecating accent, and Marguerite Veronica, pausing to look on, would have sworn that the girl had barely suppressed a titter of sheer mirth.

"A young ma-a-en!" Phyllis protracted the word disdainfully. Then she made abrupt question. "What did he say his name was?"

This time, the titter was very much in evidence, as the maid responded, —

"He didn't say."

Phyllis shut her jaw. Then she opened it, just long enough to query, —

"Why didn't you ask him?"

"I did," the maid retorted hotly. "Mrs. Leslie always has us ask the names, to keep out umbrella menders and those Syrian peddlers in a suitcase."

Phyllis disregarded this bit of collateral information.

"And what did he tell you?" she demanded, with a grim sort of majesty.

"He told me," the maid was obviously quoting, as she answered; "that you'd be so jolly well pleased to see him that we'd best keep it up a secret, till you came."

"Fudge!" Phyllis stuck her pen up, rampant, in her

tight knob of hair. "Very well," she added curtly. "I'll go down and see him for myself."

Marguerite Veronica, petticoated and dusty, put in a brief remonstrance.

"Just as you are, Phyllis?" she questioned.

"Certainly. How else?" Phyllis's tone was crushing in its dignity. Then, without another word, she turned and left the room.

Down in the drawing-room below, she found her guest awaiting her. Contrary to his prediction of her experiencing any jolly good amount of pleasure at the sight of him, she found herself face to face with a total stranger. He was a lean little man who might have been of any age from sixteen to sixty, a man with a loosely sagging jaw, a weazen, wrinkled face and a single eyeglass whence a wide black ribbon dangled to lose itself somewhere inside his tall, stiff collar. When Phyllis first came in sight of him, the glass was focussed upon the middle of the ceiling, and its owner seemed to be lost in profound meditation. At the sound of her step upon the threshold, he sprang up with every appearance of alert and pleased enthusiasm. The pleased enthusiasm speedily left his face, however, and he took a hurried step backward and behind his chair, as Phyllis, her hand extended like some weapon cleaving the air before her, and her face a mask of impassive hostility, bore down upon him.

"How do you do?" she demanded very sternly.

The sternness caused the guest's muscles to relax, and his glass fell with a sounding click. As if to claim

its impersonal protection, he rested one hand upon the back of the chair, turning it slightly, so that its cushioned seat should serve to form a barrier between himself and Phyllis.

"Thank you, I'm really quite well, you know," he answered. "But, I say, there must be some mistake."

Phyllis eyed him coldly.

"I should say there was," she made reply. "I was told you had asked for me."

"Oh, no; I wouldn't do such a thing as that," the guest responded, with a fervour whose signification happily was lost upon Phyllis. "I asked for Miss Stayre, you know."

"I am Miss Stayre," Phyllis asserted, with majestic brevity.

Hurriedly the stranger screwed his glass into his eye and took a fresh look at Phyllis. Then, with an odd little air of finality, he dropped the glass and left it swaying on its silken sash.

"Oh, no; you aren't," he assured her gently. "You can't be. There must be some mistake."

"But I am," Phyllis told him testily, for she was in no mood to have her own identity contradicted in such a summary fashion as all this.

Again the stranger sought his glass.

"But you can't be it, you know," he argued. "At least," he continued, in apparent contradiction of the testimony of his senses; "you may be another one, got in from outside; but you can't possibly be the Miss Stayre in this house."

"But I am," Phyllis persisted, even in the face of his denials.

The caller shook his head, dislodging, as he did so, a few locks of spiky hair that tumbled forward on his brow, giving his elderly face the look of an unkempt schoolboy just aroused from a long night's sleep.

"You can't," he iterated, and his voice now threatened to become a little shrill. "You can't be that one, don't you see, because she's quite a different sort of chap. That is," he added, as a sudden doubt assailed him; "she used to be, you know, three years ago. Of course, she may be you, after all. They say that college life is bound to be a little trying to a chap's good looks."

"Oh!" Light dawned on Phyllis. "You want to see my sister, I suppose."

Dubiously, very, very dubiously the caller scanned his present hostess from head to heel.

"May be," he made guarded answer. "It's not too easy to be quite sure, you know, and I'd hate to make another mistake." He pulled out his handkerchief, unfolded it and passed it across his brow. "Really," he went on, in explanation of this last manoeuvre; "a mistake of this kind does get a man to feeling very fussed and warm."

"I should think it might," Phyllis told him, and her tone held its own rebuke.

The caller looked up from beneath the folds of handkerchief.

"You feel it, too?" he queried sympathetically.

"Not at all. Why should I?" Phyllis answered so sternly that he promptly folded up his handkerchief and put it in his pocket, stuck his glass in his eye and came to respectful attention.

Phyllis determined to leave to him the breaking of the silence; and he appeared to lack the needful courage, so the ensuing pause was long. At length, however, he did break it.

"I say," he queried meekly; "what do you think we'd best do about it next?"

Phyllis advised him, frankly, briefly. Ultimately and without making known his own identity, the guest departed in search of Sidney and the Tyler House. With no especial intent of malice, Phyllis directed him by way of the back campus, where he promptly proceeded to lose himself in the rocky mazes of the botanical garden. Later, much later, an obliging sophomore discovered him, wandering around and around the little frog pond, and murmuring vague explanations of his presence at the denizens therein. The sophomore was pitying and motherly. She diverted his explanations to herself, and escorted him upon his way until the back steps of the Tyler House were close at hand. Then, pointing out the path around the house, she excused herself and dashed off to meet a belated engagement. At the turn of the walk, however, she looked back. She was just in season to behold the stranger, his umbrella still spread above his head, seeking admission at the kitchen portal.

Meanwhile, Phyllis, repressing as frivolous the femi-

nine desire to telephone to Sidney and acquaint her with the impending visitation, had returned to her abandoned letter, without vouchsafing a word of explanation to the curious Marguerite Veronica. And Marguerite Veronica had arrayed herself in her most becoming frills, on the slim chance of being bidden to the drawing-room to help in entertaining her roommate's unexpected guest. However, she indulged in neither question nor recrimination. Three weeks in the same room with Phyllis Stayre had taught lessons in wiliness to Marguerite Veronica, lessons in tact which were of far greater value than any instruction that she ever had dragged out of lexicon or treatise on higher algebra.

This second time, the stranger guest evidently had made up his mind to take no chances. Furling his dripping umbrella, he advanced upon the kitchenful of maids, card in one hand, tip in the other.

"You take this up to her, some of you," he ordered. "Then, if she's the one I want to see, I'll give you this." His alternately extended hands explained his pronouns.

Quite naturally the maids hesitated. As a rule, guests of the girls did not appear by way of the back door. Then the yellow gleam of the coin in the guest's hand removed their scruples, and one of them stepped forward to lead the way into the parlour.

The stranger stepped back a pace or two, and lifted a forefinger in admonition.

"Now remember," he said as sternly as the slippery umbrella under his right arm would allow him; "unless you bring down the chap I want, you won't get any-

thing out of me, so I warn you to be very careful about the place where you go to look for her."

There was a perceptible interval before the maid came back again, a longer interval before Sidney, flushed and smiling, came into the room.

"Lord Axmuthy! Where did you come from?" she exclaimed.

The guest rose to meet her.

"Oh! This time, it's you," he remarked, by way of greeting.

Sidney laughed. A stranger might have said that her laugh came easily, all things considered.

"Whom did you expect?" she asked him.

"I expected you," Axmuthy assured her fervently. "That didn't seem to make any difference, though, for they sent me down another chap."

"Another?"

"Yes." Lord Axmuthy seated himself, clasped his gloved hands upon the crook of his umbrella and turned to gaze up at Sidney, who still stood beside him.

"When was that?"

"Just now."

"Here?"

"Oh, no."

"Where was it, then?"

"Up at the other house, the house where I left you. How could I be expected to know that you had moved?" The accent was full of accusation.

"Oh, at the Leslie house? I was there only for freshman year. Did you see Mrs. Leslie?"

"Oh, no. I didn't ask for her. I only wanted to see you, you know."

"Whom did you see?"

For some seconds, Lord Axmuthy sat staring into space, as if cogitating the answer he should make. Then, without removing his gaze from distant spaces, he gently shook his head.

"Some sort of a she-dragon," he responded. "Really, you know, it isn't necessary to be quite so stern."

A sudden fear assailed Sidney.

"Was it my sister Phyllis?" she inquired.

Lord Axmuthy turned his eyes upon her, during another interval of cogitation.

"No; I don't think it could have been," he said hurriedly at last. "She said it was. In fact, she quite insisted on it; but I'm sure she must have been mistaken. You couldn't well have had a sister of that kind, so terribly determined in her manner and with a stick-things prodded into her back hair. Besides," he added, in a final lucid outburst; "if she had been your sister, don't you know, she'd have been quite sure that she wasn't you."

Sidney turned hastily and went to pick out her own favourite chair. The choice occupied some minutes, and Lord Axmuthy employed the minutes in whispering over the upshot of his meditations. Once he interrupted himself long enough to query, —

"I say, can't I help you find a chair?"

Then, without stirring from his place, he fell back into his reverie.

Seated, Sidney made a determined effort to change the subject of the conversation. All in all, she judged it better.

"Where did you drop down from, Lord Axmuthy?" she inquired.

"I came out in a steamer, you know," he explained. "From Boston, I took the cars."

"You came by way of Boston, then?"

"Oh, no. I landed at New York. I only thought you thought I might have come out in an aeroplane," Lord Axmuthy made further explanation.

"An aeroplane?"

"Yes. You said *drop down*, you know."

Sidney repressed a sigh. In spite of all her efforts, the conversation did not appear to be running smoothly. She was glad to see Lord Axmuthy, too. She had known him rather well, three years before; she had found out that his heart was decidedly superior to his intelligence. Moreover, was he not engaged to be married to her cousin, Judith Addison, and so about to become one of her own kin? And was not her old Canadian chum, Ronald Leslie, the secretary of his British lordship, and wholly loyal to the futile little man?

"When did you land?" she asked.

"Last week. I quite forget the day," Lord Axmuthy answered languidly; "except that it wasn't on a Friday. I never mean to do anything at all on a Friday."

"But this is Friday," Sidney reminded him, with a smile.

"Oh, is it?" Axmuthy seemed involved in silent

computations, if one might judge by the motions of his lips and fingers. "Oh, so it is," he added, with a discouraged drop in his voice. "I suppose that accounts for it all, you know."

"Very likely," Sidney responded as gravely as she could. "Did Ronald come over with you?"

"Over?"

"From England?"

"Out, you mean," Lord Axmuthy corrected gently. "Yes. He came out with me. Poor chap! He's in now, though."

"In?"

"Yes. In the house, over at Boston. He's got a cold."

"I am sorry. I suppose he will be here soon."

"Oh, yes," Lord Axmuthy replied, with an accurate attention to detail. "He'll come after me out here, as soon as he gets through sneezing. That's the reason I didn't ask for Mrs. Leslie."

Sidney felt that her own brain was reeling, with its efforts to keep up with the mental gymnastics of Lord Axmuthy.

"What is?" she asked him.

"That I was afraid she'd be alarmed. Colds are very prevalent, just now. In fact, I feel as if I had one coming. I was so very warm, over at the other place — really, that young woman was most unpleasantly determined — and then I found it damp about the frog pond."

"The frog — pond?"

"Yes. That is what the girl called it. She found me there, you know, and brought me out," Lord Axmuthy made lucid explanation. "I really hope I haven't got a cold," he added anxiously.

Sidney gripped her fast-vanishing gravity and held on to it as firmly as she could.

"I hope not, I am sure," she said courteously. "Are you planning to stay long in America, this time?"

Lord Axmuthy's reply was noncommittal.

"That depends," he said.

Sidney took a fresh line of suggestion.

"How did you leave Judith?" she asked him.

"Very seedy."

"What is the matter with her? Another cold?"

Sidney spoke lightly, quite unprepared for the sombreness of Axmuthy's next words.

"Oh, no. I fancy it's the weeping."

"The weeping?" Sidney's voice held a whole row of interrogation points.

"Yes. One always weeps, you know, when one's engagement is broken. At least," he corrected himself hastily; "the girl does."

"But — but is her engagement broken?"

"Oh, rather."

"But why? What for?"

"Oh," Lord Axmuthy spoke now with cheery nonchalance; "we couldn't seem to hit it off. But, I say," his voice grew a bit more earnest on the words; "is there any reason that we two chaps can't keep on being cousins?"

Sidney rose to her feet in haste.

"How stupid I am, Lord Axmuthy!" she exclaimed.

"Of course, you want to see Miss Argyle, too."

Lord Axmuthy appeared to be absorbed in considering the answer to his own recent question.

"Oh, I don't mind," he replied absently.

Nevertheless, Sidney departed in search of Day.

She was absent for some time, a time filled in, above stairs, with argument and exhortation. Day, however, was as adamant.

"It's no use, Sidney," she said flatly. "I simply will not go down. It was a mean trick of yours to come to call me, when the creature hadn't asked for me. Do you remember what I went through, three years ago?"

"You, more than all the rest of us?" Sidney asked unfeelingly.

"Yes, any amount more. He never would have much to say to Janet, and he only took you by way of Judith. What a shame that the engagement is off! They seemed ideally matched up, as a pair of dunces. Yes, I know Judith is your cousin; but what of that? You don't have to live her down."

"Never mind Judith," Sidney protested. "Day, aren't you coming down?"

"No; I — are — not!" Day answered firmly. "When he was here before, I lugged him around on top of my conscience, until I became a thing of derision to the entire college. This time, I absolutely will not assume any such responsibility. He is your cousin; at least, he tried his best to be, and it is your duty to look after him."

Accordingly, Sidney went down alone.

"I am so sorry," she offered vague apology; "but I found Miss Argyle had an important engagement that I hadn't known about."

Lord Axmuthy looked up with a wide and cheery smile.

"Oh, I wouldn't mind too much about that," he reassured Sidney. "It isn't as if to-day were the only day, you know. I expect to be about here till next summer."

"Till — next summer!" Sidney gasped.

"Yes. It's not a bad idea," Lord Axmuthy explained affably. "I've been thinking it out, myself, since you went up-stairs. You see, Leslie's sister matriculates, or something, this next June, and he'll like to be about to watch her do it. It's quite easy, too, to arrange it, for June isn't but six months off. No, five. No — mm — six!" The final result of his computations came out quite triumphantly. "That's not so long that we can't stop on in the neighbourhood and wait till it is over. I've been thinking it all over, while you were gone away up-stairs," he repeated, with manifest pride in his own announcement.

And Sidney, hearing, came to the swift determination that, henceforward, she would leave to Lord Axmuthy no space for silent meditation. The result of such meditation was likely to be fraught with inconvenience.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE two Popes, Amy and Helen, were curiously unlike; curiously unlike was their choice of friends. On that account, it had been agreed that their senior year vacations should be given up to two house parties, not one. Helen would entertain at Easter. Amy's party, on the other hand, would take place immediately after Christmas, and her choice of guests had been foreordained in the preceding summer.

At the eleventh hour, however, Janet Leslie revoked her own acceptance of the invitation.

"But you said you would," Amy urged her, the more cordially because Janet was the least her favourite of all her coming guests.

"I know; but we didn't expect Ronald then," Janet explained. "Now that he is here, I can't go off to leave him."

"But if he stays till June?"

"Lord Axmuthy may change his mind. Besides, it's five years since we had a Christmas together."

"You weren't going to start until the twenty-seventh, anyway," Amy reminded her.

"Yes; but even then — Really, Amy, you wouldn't leave him, if he were your brother and just come back from two years in England," Janet said quite simply.

For the space of a moment, there trembled upon the tip of Amy's hospitable tongue the invitation to Janet to come and bring her brother with her. Then she held her peace. Ronald Leslie was astonishingly good looking, and he had the manners of a charming boy. None the less, Amy had her doubts about him as an addition to her party. It was her girlish determination to make Jack Blanchard her most honoured guest. Janet, in the days past, had made no secret of her reservations concerning Jack. It would be no especial wonder if Janet's brother should share her reservations. Accordingly, Amy, liking Ronald well and admiring him not a little, yet withheld her invitation. Perhaps it was quite for the best. The invitation, instead of changing the course of events, merely would have hastened it a little, and events, in senior year, are best retarded.

Lord Axmuthy had made his appearance at Smith College, ten days before the Christmas holidays. Ronald had followed him, a day or two later; and the two young men had taken up their abode together at the Inn. Ronald Leslie, in those early days of his return, was much with his mother, much with Janet. It had been no slight sacrifice for him, the leaving his mother and sister to make their way as best they could, alone, while he crossed the seas to England to act as mental sponsor for his chaotic, futile little lordship. The period of absence seemed to him unduly long, the distance from coast to coast unduly great; and he gained only a meagre satisfaction out of the generous drafts he sent them, every month. To his eager, loyal mind, it would have

been vastly more to the purpose if he could have been at home with them, working at whatever came; but common sense rose to the rescue, and forced him to the realization that his immoderate salary counted for more, even, than his protecting presence, just now when Janet's education was to be financed.

Happily for Ronald Leslie, however, Lord Axmuthy was of a clinging nature, and refused to go from home without his secretary. Happily for him, too, three years before, Lord Axmuthy had engaged himself to a Boston girl, sister of Paul Addison and cousin of Sidney Stayre. Now, all at once, he had become possessed of the idea that it would be well to cross the ocean and talk over plans for getting married. Unhappily for Lord Axmuthy, though, an engagement born of two dozen days of social intercourse and nourished upon letters, frequent, but on the one side very brief, does not hold within itself all the essential elements of durability. There had been an hour of enthusiastic greeting; there had been four endless days of mutual boredom, followed by a day of friction. The next day, Lord Axmuthy had valeted himself into his suitcase, and departed in search of his ex-prospective cousin Sidney and of consolation.

Not that Lord Axmuthy was broken-hearted, however. He took his shattered engagement, as he took all things else, with a kind of dreary nonchalance. None the less, he plainly was down-hearted, during those last weeks of the dying year. He spent long hours shut up in his room, alternately sorting over his neckties and choosing out

those of the gloomiest tints, and sitting abstractedly before his desk, his hair awry and his pen ready in his fingers, awaiting the proper inspiration to proceed.

Just once, the inspiration seemed about to catch him, and he even wrote, —

“I loved a girl, a shallow girl,
But she was passing fair.
About her face yellow curl
 lock of hair.”

But, try as he would, he failed to fill in the missing words. For days afterwards, he sat during long hours at a time, gazing at the paper on his desk; but the inspiration proved elusive. It never came again. Accordingly, Lord Axmuthy was forced to abandon his cherished dream of sending a copy of the verses to Judith, for a New Year present.

Ronald Leslie, meanwhile, had not the faintest possible notion of the way in which his lordship spent his time. Ronald's duties, estimated by the number of hours they took, were always slight; he judged it to be not the least of them to observe his lordship's manifest desire for solitude. For that reason, Ronald felt himself free to go his way at all sorts of odd hours which ordinarily were occupied by his employer. For the most part, these odd hours were given up to Janet and his mother. Now and then, however, when he found them busy, he went in search of his two old, old friends, Day Argyle and Sidney Stayre.

Ronald had known both girls well, in his old days,

the one at Grande Rivière, all one idle summer holiday, the other in Quebec during the next winter, a winter of abandoned dreams and plans, of hard work and of harder cares. He had seen both girls again, three years before, had seen them often during the long winter month that Lord Axmuthy had elected to spend in Northampton, and in the brief succeeding visits that had dotted the remainder of the college year. Often, too, since his last return to England, he had thought about them, remembering their good times together, and trying in vain to decide which one of them had proved the better chum. It was no easy question, either. Both girls had been of value to his growing manhood; he recognized his debt to both, but in such different ways. Sidney's relation to him had been of steady loyalty, strong, unchanging, sane. Day's had been more intermittent, but more inspiring while it lasted, albeit checkered now and then with petty misunderstandings and even hints of friction. The friction had been good for him; the misunderstandings had arisen, he admitted now, out of his own narrower British point of view. They had scratched his surface and ministered to his later growth. Moreover, they always had ended, leaving him better friends with Day than ever. As for Sidney, there had never been a question of her friendship. It was as stable and unchanging as were the old blue Laurentides that ringed his northern home, as unchanging and as restful.

One only needed a glance into Ronald Leslie's face to rest assured that he would be quick to appreciate

such friendship. His changing colour, his short upper lip, the nervous contraction of his straight brown brows: all these things betrayed only too surely that he was sensitive, even a bit hot-tempered. Outwardly and even apart from the extreme refinement of his face, he was singularly good to look upon. He was a slim young giant, six feet three in his stockings, wide of shoulder, lean of limb, the greyhound type of Briton known the wide world over. His well-set head was crowned with a thatch of wavy dark brown hair; his clean-cut features, the healthy scarlet in his cheeks, and his bright brown eyes: these made him a man marked in any crowd.

Ronald Leslie's looks, however, were the least part of his attractions, once one knew him well. In spite of his peppery temper, his sensitive trick of picking up a slight where none had been intended, Ronald was intensely affectionate, intensely loyal. Unlike most young Americans of his age and class, moreover, he saw nothing especially unmanly in showing out his affection; he could see no reason why the whole world should not be aware that for him, as yet, Janet and, even more, his dainty little mother, were the central points of his own solar system. He even petted them in public; but the matter-of-fact fashion in which he went about the petting prevented its taking anything whatsoever from his manhood.

Under such conditions as this, and inasmuch as it was now more than two years since his last trip out from England, it was no especial wonder that Janet had

been loath to leave him. True, he would be in America until late June; but, during the termtime of her senior year, Janet's days would, of necessity, be full of other things. Ronald could have only her leisure time, not the whole day she longed to give him. Moreover, in the holidays, when all the girls were gone away, both she and Ronald could be in the Leslie house and alone with each other and their mother. Amy's party would have its own attractions. Amy lived in Cleveland; her home was said to be most charming. Her mother was known to be equally charming, and the list of holiday plans concocted by her and Amy had been enough to dazzle Janet whose inborn Canadian simplicity had never wholly yielded to the habits of the gayest girl college that the States can show. None the less, she saw the twenty-seventh dawn and darken, without a single qualm of regret for the journey she might so easily have taken.

Asked, at the end of the first week in Amy's home, each one of the five guests would have given unqualified assent to the statement that the party was a brilliant success. However, a mere outsider, looking on, would have felt that it was likely to become a group of family duets. In the first place, Rob's injured leg, never very strong, had been wrenched by a slip on the icy threshold of the dining-car. This curtailed his activities to some extent; and Day, as far as her duty to her hostess would allow, fussed over him like a motherly and distracted hen. Then, too, Paul Addison, yielding to some boyish spasm of self-consciousness, turned shy in Amy's pres-

ence, and clung to his cousin with a devotion which would have been comic, had it not been so decidedly ill-timed. This, of necessity, threw Jack on Amy's tender mercies, an arrangement which neither of them seemed to consider tiresome in the very least. Of course, everybody did everything, save for a few of the outdoor interests which Rob judged it the part of prudence to forego. But, no matter how they started out, the ending was the same: Amy and Jack, flanked on the one side by the brother and sister, upon the other hand by the two cousins.

Not that Jack neglected the other girls, however. His attitude to Sidney was too well established to admit of any question. As for Day, they both knew that her place in his life was quite unique, although neither one of them had ever sought to analyze its nature. It was only that he and Amy found endless points of contact, endless subjects for discussion, countless ways of finding entertainment, each in the other's point of view. Jack had never shown himself finer nor more manly than in those winter holidays; Amy had never been so gentle, so little self-assertive, so careful to sheathe the point of her wit, so thoughtful of the pleasure of her comrades. And Mrs. Pope, always at hand and always watchful, noted the change with smiling eyes. Why not? Her young daughter was fast stepping towards the womanhood that now loomed close before her.

The winter days and evenings, meanwhile, were passing in a whirl of gayety. The weather was ideal, crispy cold, as the lake winters know so well how to be. There

were drives and walks and skating parties; there were matinées and teas and dinners, and there was one wonderful night of grand opera, when the girls all put on their frilliest frocks and when Mary Garden sang.

In the interval between the first and second acts, Rob crossed over to the back of the box and calmly drove Jack out of his chair.

"Go away," he said composedly. "You play with Day. I want to talk to Amy."

Jack, nothing loath, went forward and dropped down at Day's side. She turned to greet him with the little smile she reserved for him and Rob alone.

"Wonderful; isn't it?" she said. "Amy couldn't have planned a better climax for our visit. I think it's just as well that we're starting for home, to-morrow afternoon."

"It has been a good time, Day? You've enjoyed it?" His voice sounded a little anxious.

She attributed the note of anxiety to his interest in Amy's complete success as hostess, and she smiled at the swift suspicion, as it crossed her mind.

"Of course. Why not?" she asked directly.

Jack dropped his voice a little.

"I was only afraid this strain of Rob's had tied you up, rather more than you'd have liked."

"You know it isn't being tied up, when it's a case of Rob," she reminded him. "For years, ever since the winter we were in Quebec, I've never seemed to catch up on all the things I had to say to him. It's

such fun to be with him. Of course, though," her face clouded; "I have been worried. It's three years since he has had a set-back; I had supposed the danger of them was all over. Jack, do you suppose he ever will be quite strong?"

Most men, under such appealing eyes and in such surroundings, would have fibbed. Not Jack, however.

"Never quite sound, Day, I'm afraid," he told her gently. "One isn't, not after a hurt like that. All we can do is to look after him, and help him make the best of things."

She smiled up at him, without daring to trust herself to speak, and Jack went on more gently, even.

"After all, Day, the best is not going to be too bad. Rob has the good of life, as he goes along; he makes friends, good ones, wherever he is. If he were to be thrown on his own resources, it would make more difference; but your father will look out for that, has already looked out for it. I really think you needn't worry. I am only sorry you've had the care of this thing here, just when Amy has been planning an extra good time for us all together."

Turning, Day faced him happily, no reservation in her eyes.

"It has been a good time, Jack. Except for the little dragging worry about Rob, I have been happy, every single minute of the time."

For a long moment, Jack sat silent, looking into her face with eyes as brown and honest as her own. Then, —

"I, too," he echoed her.

Then came another pause. Day broke it, by saying with some inconsequence, but very gently, —

“And Amy is such a dear, you know.”

As she spoke, she smiled directly into Jack's intent brown eyes, too happily absorbed in her own vague girlish imaginings to heed the fact that, at her words, Jack's keen brown eyes had clouded suddenly.

“I say, Amy,” Rob was remarking, under cover of Paul's chatter to his cousin and Mrs. Pope; “I wonder if you know what all this has meant to Jack.”

“How do you mean, Rob?” Amy's face betrayed the fact that she was purposely impenetrable.

“This is his first big thing, socially,” Rob reminded her. “I fancy he will remember it as long as he lives.”

“I hope he will, I'm sure,” Amy said idly. “Why should he, though? More than the rest of you, I mean.”

“Do you remember last summer?”

“Yes. Wasn't he stunning in his red clothes?” Amy made counter question, out of her wilful misunderstandings.

“I was referring to the row, Janet's row,” Rob corrected her. “You needn't be so majestic, Amy; there isn't a living soul more loyal to Jack than I am. That's the reason I know just what this visit is going to count to him. Of course, there was the wedding; but that was shorter and more official. He was asked there on the man's account, too; and that makes lots of difference. Out here, it was you, just you, not any man about it; and you've given him the time of his whole life.”

"He has times enough at home in New York," Amy argued perversely.

"Not of this kind, though," Rob argued back again. "He's asked out more or less in our set; but the more is generally when Day and I are at home. Even then, he doesn't always go. Hang it all, Amy!" Rob cast himself forward in his chair and eyed her steadily above his clasped hands. "Can't you see what I am driving at: that I am tickled to pieces that there is somebody besides ourselves and Sidney who is learning to know Jack for what he honestly, truly is. No end of people like him. He makes friends on sight. You go deeper than the others, though; in time, you may find out just what he is and what he counts for."

"Haven't I now?" Amy asked, half thoughtfully, half in a little mood of self-defence.

Rob shook his head.

"Not yet. In fact," he smiled down at his clasped fingers, and the smile was too intent to be very full of mirth; "I sometimes think that we none of us will ever find it out completely. Still," he rose, as the orchestra took up the introduction to the second act; "it's worth the trying, anyway."

And Amy's answering smile gave token of her full agreement.

None the less, when they reached home, that night, Jack's genial brow was gloomy; and, in the pajama-ed talk at bedtime, in the great room he shared with Rob and Paul, Jack failed to make his customary contributions to the gossip with which the boys, as a rule,

wound up the day. Paul, student fashion, sought to probe the mood with chaff; but Rob, knowing his friend better, seeing deeper, brought the talk to a hurried close and switched off the lights.

"Sleepy, old man?" he queried then, pausing beside Jack in the darkness.

An instant later, Jack felt the firm grip of Rob's fingers on his fist, before he limped away to bed.

Next morning, to every one's surprise, the mood endured. Jack was perfectly courteous, perfectly cordial, and seemingly as full of fun as ever; but the spontaneity of it all had gone. It was as if, at the very last and in the presence of his hostess only, his kindly dignity had failed him, and he had become self-conscious, distrustful of himself and her. Amy, on her own side, did her merry best to ignore the change in their relations, to pass it off as a thing of no account. None the less, the morning dragged slightly; the talk, despite Paul's nonsense, lagged, and there came pauses which not even Day's unfailing tact could break. Worst of all, it was too intangible to admit of any comment, even of cousinly asides. They all felt it; felt, too, instinctively, that to admit its existence as a theme for conversation could only make the matter worse.

With punctilious care, then, they carried out their morning plans of drive and luncheon. Carefully they kept up the pretext that nothing was amiss, kept it up with the more difficulty because no one of them but Jack, asked, could have told what really was amiss. The talk and chatter and the fun went on to the very

end. Nevertheless, it was with a little sigh of dazed relief that the guests packed themselves into the train for home, and Amy found herself alone upon the platform, staring after the receding train, and wondering just what sort of an ill wind it would prove to be, this ill wind blowing up between her frank self and the honest personality of her favourite guest.

Settled in the car, while the other boys arranged the hand luggage and Sidney was busy with the parting sheaf of roses which had met her on the station platform, Day turned to Jack impulsively.

"Cross, Jackie boy; or what is the matter?" she inquired, while she bent forward towards him to rest her hand upon the linen-covered arm of his chair.

Gravely his eyes met hers, and she thought she saw the colour rising in his cheeks; but his answering voice was level and unfaltering.

"Not with you, Day," he told her, after an instant's silence, and, speaking, his voice was grave, even as his eyes had been. "Never with you, Day," he repeated slowly. "Only with myself."

And then, before Day could reply, or ask for explanation, Paul had swept down upon them with a question, and, to all appearing, the moment had completely gone.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE *Monthly* Room, down in the Student Building, is a cheery, sunshiny place of a winter afternoon, all windows and bookcases and a table in the middle, where the editorial board are supposed to have their sittings. As a matter of fact, however, they usually do have their sittings on the wide window seats whose cushioned tops disguise the fact that they are mere receptacles for old copies of the college magazine.

To the aspirant for fame, literary and otherwise, it seems as if many a reputation had been made or marred inside that room. The freshman mind, in particular, is commonly prone to be a victim of that notion. Indeed, there is some degree of truth within the notion; for is it not a matter of historical record that the work of one budding genius was refused admission inside the wide white covers of the *Monthly*, not for any lack of merit, but for fear of what too early recognition might do to blight the promise of freshman precocity? Such tales as that, going abroad in the college, are prone to multiply their actual facts by dozens, until the tradition becomes established past gainsaying that early genius is no ticket of admission to the halls of fame.

Nevertheless, freshmen still continue to knock at the *Monthly* doors, and will continue to knock until

the magazine's remotest end; and, one wet January afternoon, the editorial board, spread about at ease upon the cushions of the window seats, were engaged in tepid discussion regarding one such candidate.

"Her work is fair, just fair," the head editor insisted, with a firmness which belied her mild blue eyes.

Janet Leslie, quite as usual, was leading the ranks of the opposition. Just now, moreover, the opposition consisted of but two, Janet and another.

"It's more than fair. It's very original." She emphasized her words with a wave of the pages in her hand. "Really, girls, it's ages since we've had a better idea than there is in this story."

"The idea is well enough," a voice responded tranquilly. "The trouble is with the story. It is high-flown, and yet it sounds as if it were shovelled together. It's chaotic, and it's rough at all the edges."

"So is Kipling," Janet retorted.

"And Frank Norris," added her supporter.

Janet disdained the support.

"I never heard of him. What did he do?"

"Oh, things, and *The Pit*," her adherent coached her, in a swift aside. Then she raised her voice. "Can't you girls see that that's the whole genius of the thing?" she demanded. "The style just suits the idea. The girl must have spent hours hunting it out; or else she really is a natural genius."

"That kind doesn't flourish here," the head editor said, with a gloom developed by five months of seeking the flower of genius in the ten-acre lot of mediocrity.

"Time it did, then. Who did you say the girl was, Janet? A freshman?"

"It's Phil Stayre." Janet smoothed out the leaves from which she had been reading.

"Who is she?"

"Sidney's sister."

"The one they call the Dromedary?" The question sounded a little bit incredulous.

"Even so," Janet responded calmly.

"You don't mean it! Well, she looks a genius."

The head editor lifted her eyes sharply, a frown above her laugh.

"That's not fair, Polly. I mean to go in for writing, myself, you know, and I resent the theory that a person must be a dowd, or else an incapable, to make a success of it. If ever I do write in earnest, write as a profession, my first care will be to have good clothes and to know how to put through a dinner party without bungling. As for this story —"

"Thanks," Janet interpolated. "I too have inkish aspirations."

And Polly, whose baptismal name was Pauline Evelyth, subsided, until she could recast her theories of genius.

"As to this story," the head editor continued; "we none of us can tell anything about it from Janet's reading."

"Thanks," Janet interposed again. "Why not, please?"

"Because you forgot it wasn't a rehearsal for dra-

“matics,” a minor editor said bluntly. “As it is now, we none of us know how much of it is you, and how much the story.”

“It mostly is,” Janet answered rather more vaguely than she was quite aware.

“And another thing,” the head editor said slowly; “if we do put in this story, won’t we get credit for doing it out of regard to Sidney’s feelings?”

Janet sought to close the discussion.

“Rubbish!” she said, and started for the door.

“Don’t be too sure that it would be an advantage to Sidney’s feelings,” a voice suggested.

Janet turned back again.

“Why not?” she asked crisply. “She’s her sister.”

“Precisely.” The speaker leaned back, yawning, on her cushions, and idly traced the path of a falling drop upon the pane outside. “My own acquaintance with Phil Stayre is limited, very limited. In fact, I have been at some pains to keep it so. However, watching the two girls together, it’s my belief that Sidney has no especial cause to welcome anything that’s likely to make Phil any more cocky.”

“Sidney is very fond of her.” Janet crossed the room and sat down beside the table. “She’s proud of her, too.”

“She must be!” shrieked an answering chorus which included even the mild-eyed head editor.

“She is,” Janet iterated firmly. “She was simply delighted, when Phyllis made the German club, the youngest freshman ever to go in. I was there, when the

news came, and I know. However, in a thing like this, Sidney's opinion doesn't count. She never has cared a straw about the *Monthly*, nor about the writing girls. It isn't in her line; and it would never occur to her that there was any especial honour in a freshman's getting in."

"In that case — and you ought to know, Janet — we might as well —" The head editor hesitated for a courteous word.

"Put the thing in," Janet interrupted.

"No. Leave it out; at least, for the present. Later on, if we get short of stuff, we can take it."

"You'd much better take it now," Janet advised.

"It's too crude and too jerky."

"But it's strong. Look at that climax. It really comes to something, not just fizzles out into mere language, as *Monthly* stories almost always do," Janet argued.

The chorus broke out again, this time reproachfully and in variants of the rebuking theme, —

"Oh-h, Janet Leslie!"

"I can't help it; it's true," Janet said a bit defiantly. "I don't write fiction, only gists, so I suppose I haven't any reason to state an opinion; but really, girls, nine tenths of our stories don't go anywhere. They are pretty and sweet; but they're just about as expressive as a French doll in a lace nightie. This thing of Phil's is all backbone."

The head editor yawned politely behind her hand. As usual in the heat of argument, Janet Leslie had flown

free from the facts of the case, and needed to be brought back to truth.

"Yes, maybe," she assented. "Still, for my part, I like my vertebrae to be padded up a little."

Janet rose once more.

"As you will," she said rather haughtily. "Of course, you must do as you think best. It's my advice, though, that you put it in. If she gets the least bit of encouragement, there's no telling how far Phil Stayre will go."

The head editor smiled grimly.

"No," she agreed. "I should judge there wasn't."

Strange to say, it had been Day Argyle, dainty and sweet, who had discovered in Phyllis this sinister streak of something nearly akin to genius. According to her resolution, expressed to Sidney, Day had taken it upon herself to try in earnest to penetrate the shell of Sidney's molluscan sister. She had dropped in on Phyllis at all sorts of odd hours, had coaxed her out for walks, had had her over to vespers, followed by Sunday night supper. Phyllis had submitted to the socializing process in the same chastened fashion in which she would have yielded to any other dose, bitter, but palpably intended for her good. Day she had accepted as a part of the dose, the sugary coating of the pill, and hence a necessary evil. For Phyllis, by this time, had made her first discovery born of her academic surroundings: that no one-sided girl can for long stand out as a warning beacon to her comrades. The girls who influence the college, the girls who blaze new trails for emulation, or even for tradition, must be well-rounded mortals,

with infinite points of contact. Phyllis still held firmly to her theory that her mission in life was to be improving; improvement being denied apparently to girls of one dimension, she shut her teeth and set to work to increase her points of contact.

It was here that Day helped her most; here, in fact, that Day, out of all the girls, was first to see that help was needed. Bit by bit, by suggestion, argument and even good, sound lectures, Day set to work to aid Phyllis in becoming a little more normal. Alternately she set her down beside girls who shared her own besetting sins, and took her out to meet girls who were the very opposite of Phyllis's thorny, horny self, girls whose fluffy hair hid brains of reputation all the college over, girls whose frilly frocks were dotted with the pins of the departmental clubs whose membership no mere popularity can ever win, girls who danced and golfed just as well as they made chemical analyses, and essays on Blake, girls who could criticize with equal skill the design of an imported frock and of a formal garden.

Phyllis said little to indicate that she realized the value of this new form of education. As a rule, her attitude was that of passive observation, even a little scornful now and then. Again and again Day was minded to give up in despair the effort to make anything normal out of the awkward, self-assertive freshman she had taken as her own especial charge. Then, just as she was ready to abandon the attempt as useless, some trivial sign of change encouraged her, bade her to persevere.

If she could make Phyllis over into a real college girl, Day reflected, it would be well worth her while. If not? She sighed. All of her own intimate friends had gone to Springfield for the afternoon. It would have been good to go with them, if only — She smothered her regrets, and knocked on Phyllis's door.

Phyllis lifted her head, and spoke shamefacedly.

"I was wishing you'd come, Day. I wanted to show this thing to you. I want you to tell me honestly if it's any good," she said, and, rising brusquely, she tossed some inky, blotted sheets into Day's lap.

And Day, reading, knew by instinct that it was good, very, very good, although her own gentler tastes were for a daintier, more polished form of art. Phyllis used her pen, not like a rapier, but like a shillelagh; but it could not be denied that the shillelagh had its power.

That had been before Christmas. Four weeks later, the *Monthly* editors were engaged in warm discussion of the merits of Phyllis Stayre's production. Ultimately it was taken in; but the decision was not reached until some time after Janet had departed from the official sanctum.

"Where are you going, Janet?" her one adherent had remonstrated, at her second rising.

Janet thrust her arms into the sleeves of her rain coat, the ungainly coat of black and shiny rubber which fashion just then was ordaining as the proper garment for bad weather. Encased in them, the girls resembled nothing so much as an Amazonian police corps; but

they cared nothing about that. At Smith, as elsewhere, fashion must dominate all art.

"Over to Twenty," she said tersely, as she shrugged the coat up across her shoulders.

"What for?"

"To see Amy Pope."

"But we aren't through yet," the head editor said politely, for she feared she might have been a little curt, a moment earlier.

"I am," Janet made composed reply.

"There are some other things we really must talk over."

"I can't help that. You can go on and talk them. I've said my say, and the rest of it you can do without me." Janet's tone was not bitter, only very firm. Then she took her departure.

According to her expectations, she found Ronald waiting for her at the door. His bright face broke into a laugh, as she came towards him down the steps.

"What a jolly little Bobby you look in that thing, Janet! But aren't you early?"

The determination left her eyes, as she snuggled her hand inside his arm.

"Not so long as you are here. Have you been waiting long?"

"I'm only just here. Axmuthy had a fit of the blues, and I had to console him, before I could get off. Poor chap! He takes his broken engagement so very much to heart."

"Did you think he cared for Judith so much as all

that comes to?" Janet's accent showed that, whatever Lord Axmuthy's opinion, she was not enthusiastic over Judith.

"No-o." Ronald prolonged the word thoughtfully. "It isn't that. Beyond her being a pretty, dainty little mortal, he didn't care for her. In fact, if she hadn't made up her mind to get —"

"Hush!" Janet protested, laughing. "It isn't decent to abuse another girl to me."

"You're nothing but my little sister, and Judith is rather a —"

Janet laughed again. She was now quite another Janet from the girl who had been arguing in the open meeting.

"Stiff proposition?" she made audacious query. "You needn't look so shocked; that's what they say at Harvard. But, if Lord Axmuthy doesn't care for Judith, what in the world is the matter with him?"

"Conscience," her brother told her. "It makes him sound a bit of a cad, Janet; but he's not. He is not a cad in the least. It is only that he has an overgrown sense of honour, and it is warped a little bit, like most of his other qualities. As nearly as I can get at the root of the matter, he is glad to have broken off with Judith — of course, he let her do the breaking — but now he is worrying for fear he hadn't made it plain to her just what she was about to lose."

"I should think she might have discovered, by this time." Janet's chuckle was irreverent. "He isn't especially opaque. Where is he now?"

"I dropped him at the Tyler, as I came along."

"Poor Sidney!" Janet said.

"No; it's Day, this time. He says that, after all, she understands him better."

Janet forgot her earlier rebuke to Ronald.

"Because she doesn't know Judith quite so well?" she made flippant query. Then she held her peace, for, as they rounded the corner of the Tyler House, Lord Axmuthy came towards them down the steps.

"Oh!" he said. Then apparently he bit his idea in two, and swallowed the latter half of it.

Janet nodded the more cordially, because she was afraid Lord Axmuthy might have overheard her words to Ronald.

"How do you do?" she called blithely.

"Very bad," Lord Axmuthy made gloomy rejoinder. Then he added, "How extraordinarily ugly you all look! I fancy you must have bought it by the dozen."

"It?" Janet's tone was a trifle blank.

"The coat thing. It's quite unladylike, you know. I'd hate to see my step-mother wearing one."

Ronald suppressed a smile behind a yawn. As Lord Axmuthy's step-mother was seventy, buxom and addicted to point lace caps, the association of ideas was piquant. Janet sought to defend herself, however.

"They keep us very dry, and we don't always have to stop for an umbrella."

Lord Axmuthy took a firm grip of his own umbrella with his left hand, and, with his right one, screwed his glass into his eye.

"Oh, but I would," he urged. "Really, it's better not to get a habit of such things."

"Which things?" Janet inquired. "Umbrellas?"

"These coat things," Lord Axmuthy persisted. "They're rather like a suffragette, you know; one looks for you to beat him with your bonnet next."

Prudently Janet dodged the political aspect of the case, and came to the personal one.

"Where are going?" she asked his lordship.

"Home." Lord Axmuthy again spoke gloomily. Then all at once his tone brightened. "Unless I go along with you," he added.

For their convenience in walking together under one umbrella, Janet's hand still rested on her brother's arm. Now she felt the arm tighten beneath her fingers, and she was quick to guess the reason of that tightening. Her call upon Amy, that afternoon, was not so much an errand on her own account as it was an excuse for Ronald to drop in upon her classmate. Not a word of that had she said, however; it had been in a most casual fashion that she had asked Ronald to stop there for a moment with her, before going on down town. Perverse Janet Leslie might be; but she was never dense, least of all when it concerned her brother Ronald, her idol and ideal. Strange to say, moreover, though adoring him completely, Janet had never taken the attitude of many an adoring sister, that Ronald's attentions must be for herself alone. She was his sister. In that place, she easily stood first, for Mrs. Leslie's other daughter, older and long since married,

had gradually drifted out of the inner circle of the family. She was Ronald's favourite sister, then. However, that did not of necessity imply that his life held no place for other girls.

Accordingly, she had done her best to see that Ronald, coming to Northampton, should meet the choicest of her classmates. Among them, as a matter of course, had been Amy Pope; and it had been no small pleasure to Janet that Amy and Ronald, grafting this present meeting upon their slight acquaintance of three years before, should lose no time in becoming capital friends. Amy, downright and forceful, liked Ronald for his gentleness which, for some reason she could never fathom, took nothing whatsoever from his virility. Ronald, on his side, found Amy's outspoken nature, her agile wit and her splendid sense of honour a restful change after the artificial maidens he had met from time to time by way of Axmuthy. His own unlikeness to Amy, moreover, the difference in their points of view, only cemented their friendship the more closely.

Their first real talk together had taken place, the night of Amy's return from the holidays. Janet, going over to reiterate to Amy her own regrets concerning her absence, had asked Ronald, quite by chance, to go with her. Amy, a little bit downhearted by reason of the slight cloud that had blurred the final glory of her party, had found the tall Canadian, virile, yet curiously gentle, a solace to her injured feelings. The quality of the deference he gave her conversation made her feel in some elusive fashion that all her world was not involved

within her recent disappointment. Later, he had called again, and yet again, sometimes alone, sometimes with Janet. Janet, meanwhile, looking on with girlish satisfaction in their growing friendship, developed a sudden curiosity regarding the quality of the tea served at divers small resorts known to the college, a curiosity which only could be appeased by tasting the tea in company with Amy Pope and Ronald.

Amy was busy just then, exceedingly busy. Certain work that could be done up ahead, she was facing now, in preparation for the later months of spring when the play would demand her full attention; certain essays, due next term, she was preparing now. Nevertheless, busy as she was, she yet found time for all the calls and all the little impromptu teas. Ronald Leslie's quiet trick of making her feel she was something valuable, something infinitely rare and precious, was very soothing to the tall, self-reliant girl just then. Down in her heart of hearts, she was quite well aware that it was probably Ronald's attitude to any girl he chanced to meet. None the less, she liked it, liked it the more because, for some reason she could not discover, the rest of her gay world had suddenly gone awry. To Amy Pope, in those dull, thawing January days, days when the dark gray pools of water came up above the snow, days when the branches of the elms lashed the raw air with futile fury, the memory of herself, standing alone upon the station platform and wondering what ill wind had blown in upon her: that memory could blot out the present consciousness of all the rest of her gay world. And

now Ronald Leslie, tall and strong and infinitely gentle, had come to rouse her from her unreasoning gloom, unreasoning, for the honest fact of the whole matter was that Amy Pope had no real notion what she was gloomy about, or why she should be gloomy in the first place. The mood just was; that was all.

All this, however, Ronald Leslie could not know. What he did know was merely that he liked Amy Pope extremely; that he was bidding fair, in time, to like her as he did Day and Sidney, to count upon her as a lasting friend. Ronald Leslie was not given to useless self-analysis. It was enough for him that he liked Amy and that, to all appearing, she liked him in return. He promptly set to work to see as much of her as possible. Though he was not of an analytic turn of mind, yet he was human. Having discovered, as he phrased it, Amy Pope, he had no mind to share the discovery with some one else, and so his arm had tightened warningly across his sister's fingers, when Lord Axmuthy had suggested his idea of joining them.

"I can go along with you, you know," Lord Axmuthy was repeating generously.

"Oh, don't trouble," Ronald made hasty rejoinder. "It's very wet, and it would only take you out of your way."

"Didn't you find Miss Argyle in?" Janet asked him pointedly.

From beneath his dripping umbrella, Lord Axmuthy gazed at her for a moment of silent contemplation.

"I didn't ask," he told her then.

"But I thought Ronald said you had gone to call on her."

"So I had."

Janet's laugh refused to be held in.

"But how in the world did you suppose she would know you were there?" she demanded merrily.

"I didn't. I didn't care to see her, after all."

"Why not?"

"Because I saw the other one just going in ahead of me."

Experience had taught Janet that it was Lord Axmuthy's habit thus to allude to Phyllis Stayre, so she wasted no time in seeking to clear up that point. Instead, —

"What has that to do with Day?" she asked. "Besides, Phil might not have been going to their room."

Lord Axmuthy shook his head in a series of wide arcs.

"She always is, when I'm about," he made gloomy dissent. "I was afraid Miss Argyle would bring her down."

"Not unless you asked for her."

"She would have had to, you know, if the other one had wanted; and she would have wanted," he asserted.

"She seems to like a row." Then he added, in a new mood of comparative cheer, "No matter, though. I can go along with you. It's safer, because, if she's there, she's bound not to be somewhere else." And he fell into step beside them.

Just as they came out into Green Street, he spoke again, apparently from the core of his own meditations.

"Really, you know," he observed, in a meteoric flight of rhetoric; "she's so very gauche that she's positively gawky. At least," he added, with a glance at Ronald, as if in search of admiration; "that's what you Americans would say."

"I'm no American," Ronald parried.

Lord Axmuthy, his jaw somewhat agape, turned to face his secretary, apparently forgetful of Phyllis, beside the political interests involved.

"No," he admitted grudgingly at length. "No; you're not. You would have been, you know, if their chaps had only fought a very little harder; and then," his face lighted with the magnitude of the query he was ready to propound; "and then what the deuce could you have done about an accent?"

And Ronald confessed to himself a due measure of relief when a hail from Sidney, crossing the street just behind them, saved him from answering so difficult a question.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

“ **A** IS for anthropoidal ape,
Also for Axmuthy, always agape! ”

Amy Pope, speaking, hurled her best hat down on the divan which ran from the fireplace a good third of the way around the pretty drawing-room. “ Sidney Stayre, if you don’t proceed immediately and at once to call off your potential cousin, I’ll start a mutiny in the class and dethrone you.”

Sidney, unmoved by the threat, merely picked up the hat and fell to smoothing the feathers.

“ He’s not my potential cousin any more, Amy. He and Judith settled that, six weeks ago. What’s the matter, anyway? ”

“ Lord Axmuthy is the matter,” Amy responded, with unwonted testiness.

“ Don’t play with him, then,” Day advised her, from the great chair drawn up before the open fire.

“ I didn’t. How could I know the creature was going to be there? ”

“ Where? ” Sidney put the hat, feathers and all, on top of a flying Mercury who promptly vanished, all but his white ankles, inside the crown. “ Your remarks lack coherence, Amy.”

"I've caught it from him, then." Amy cast herself down among the cushions.

"When I was a little girl and had invited company to dinner," Day informed the blazing coals; "if I was cross to them, I got sent to bed."

Amy disdained the information, apropos as it was. Instead of heeding it, she went back to give a belated answer to Sidney's question.

"I've been having tea with Mother Leslie," she announced.

"Oh. And he was there. What else could you expect?" Day observed unfeelingly.

"Anything else. I thought Mother Leslie had some grains of sense," Amy said viciously, as she sat up and punched home her loosened hairpins. "Janet telephoned me to meet her there."

"With Ronald?" Day questioned, with a little smile.

"Well — yes," Amy admitted. "She did say something or other about him. She never mentioned Lord Axmuthy, though, and I supposed he would have the sense to stay at home."

"On what precedents did you base your expectations, Amy?" Sidney inquired solemnly, and Amy's petulance vanished in the general laughter.

There had been a certain reason, however, in Amy's ruffled temper, that late January afternoon, a reason which did not lie entirely in the fact that Lord Axmuthy had broken in upon her anticipated good time with Ronald Leslie. True, Ronald had been the real attraction that had lured Amy forth to seek Mrs. Leslie's tray,

that rainy afternoon; but, under some conditions, she could have borne patiently the coming of another guest. The real annoyance to Amy had lain, not in the coming of the guest, but in the manner of his conversation. Lord Axmuthy's utterances, that day, had antagonized her beyond all endurance, yet she had been helpless to stand out against them. One could no more argue with Lord Axmuthy than with a rubber dog.

All of a sudden, in the middle of some unrelated theme or other, Janet had looked up from her cup of tea.

"Oh, Mummy, that reminds me," she had said. "Did you know Rob is coming up, next week?"

"Next week?"

"Mid-years, you know," Janet reminded her. "Day told me so, just now."

Lord Axmuthy pricked up his ears.

"Rob Argyle? The fellow with the leg?" he queried.

"Most fellows answer to that description," Amy told him dryly, for it had been to her that the query apparently had been addressed.

"Oh, yes; but not of that sort," Lord Axmuthy had added, by way of explanation.

"Not as a rule." Amy's tone was still more dry. "There aren't so many boys like Rob."

"You know him, then?" Lord Axmuthy asked, as if surprised that she should have that privilege.

"Certainly." Amy turned back to Ronald a little too pointedly for the strictest code of etiquette.

The Englishman refused to be suppressed.

"Argyle always did know all sorts of people," he

remarked to his spoon. "I fancy it's his leg, or else it is the way they do things over here."

Janet, forgetful of certain past chapters in their joint experience, sought to create a digression.

"And Jack thinks he may possibly come, too," she added to her mother.

Lord Axmuthy was not to be digressed.

"Oh, yes, the porter chap," he assented, appropriating the information to himself. "That is the other one I meant."

"The other one?" Janet's mind flew off to Phyllis.

Lord Axmuthy gave an almost imperceptible jerk of his spoon in the direction of Amy.

"Besides her," he offered explanation tersely.

Amy turned back again with a jerk.

"Mr. Blanchard is not a porter."

"He used," Lord Axmuthy made laconic answer.

"Never in this world!" Amy's temper, worn a little thin by extra work and too much tea, was fast giving way.

Lord Axmuthy prepared to contest his point by bringing forth his evidence.

"Oh, yes; he was," he insisted. "I remember him; he was a terribly determined sort of chap, too, a good deal like Miss Stayre; not Sidney, you know, but the other one. Besides," he added, as a powerful conclusion; "he used to be all over buttons."

"Do you generally tie on your things, Lord Axmuthy?" Janet asked him flippantly.

Above the edge of the cup poised midway to his lips,

Lord Axmuthy gazed across at her in ruminative silence. His mouth, meanwhile, opened to receive the cup, remained increasingly ajar. Then, after a long, long interval, he set down the cup.

"Oh, really, that's very good," he said approvingly. "By George, it's very good. Tie on my things. By George!"

Between his recurring waves of mirth which bade fair to continue for an indefinite period, Amy took her dignified departure. Ronald went with her, on plea of the growing duskiness outside; and, as he walked away beside her, he was conscious of a vague wonderment at the unwonted silence that marked her mood. Born a Canadian and accustomed as he had become by now to the vagaries of his British lordship, he could not for the life of him see why those vagaries should have ruffled Amy so completely. Even less still could he discern the real reason for her silence, not resentful, but rather thoughtful. Day, whom she had seen, that very morning, had made no mention to her of Jack's possible arrival. Day's omission, as it chanced, had been quite unintentional; but Amy Pope, just then, was in a mood to seek intention where none existed. Day's failure to report Jack's plans seemed to her to darken the little cloud of misunderstanding which already lay around them. Happy as she always was to be with Ronald, to feel herself under the heedful, protecting care which few had ever thought to offer to her independent self, Amy was yet very silent, as they crossed the campus. Ronald's dark eyes

showed a little mystified, a little hurt, as he turned away at the foot of her own steps and left her to go on alone.

Janet, meanwhile, had remained with her mother, partly because she always clung to the last moment of anything approaching the old domestic life they used to lead and love, in part because she knew that, staying herself, she would force Lord Axmuthy to stay with her. Little as Janet enjoyed his lordship's society, she was by no means minded to have him spoil her brother's walk with Amy. She knew Amy well enough to be quite aware that she had been dangerously near the outside limits of her patience; she also knew that Ronald, who really hated tea, had patiently sat about and swallowed his allotted number of cups, for the simple sake of being on hand to walk home with Amy. Lord Axmuthy, however cheerily discursive, would have added little to the general enjoyment of the walk. Accordingly, Janet stuck to her place beside the tray, and plied the guest with hot and buttery buns.

At length, when Lord Axmuthy had been rendered speechless by too much bun, Janet turned back again to her mother.

"Mummy," she suggested; "let's have a party."

"A party, Janet?" It was small wonder that Mrs. Leslie's voice showed some surprise. Such hospitable suggestions were more wont to come from her than from Janet.

"Yes, a mid-years party," Janet persisted. "Can't you manage it, Mummy? Ever so many of the girls

will be away. You could feed the others early and put them to bed, upstairs."

"What kind of a party, Janet?" her mother asked her.

"Some sort of a supper, or a dinner, or something," Janet said vaguely. "If Rob and Jack are here, it will be good to have you entertain us all, the ones who were in your house, last summer."

"Eh?" Lord Axmuthy queried, as he bolted his last bit of bun. "A good plan, that. I say, let's do it. I'd help it on all I could. We'd have some games, you know, like our Christmas party at the Château." He turned to Janet, in search of answering enthusiasm.

"I am afraid Mr. Blanchard is too old to care for games," Janet told him, a little bit maliciously.

"Blanchard? Oh, that! No matter, we could leave him out," his lordship answered.

"Sidney and Day might have something to say about that," Janet reminded him.

"Oh, no; I fancy not. They used to like him; but that's no reason they should go about to dine with him," he persisted. "Really, you know, a chap in his position is bound to be quite common."

A sudden spark of anger kindled in Janet Leslie's eyes. Before her mother could interpose, the same anger rang in her haughty, clear young voice.

"Not at all, Lord Axmuthy," she said, as she rose. "He is very uncommon indeed. All in all, Mr. Blanchard," with a sudden impetuous sweep of her gloved hand, she seemed to be casting all her earlier reservations from her; "Mr. Blanchard is one of the most per-

fect gentlemen I have ever known." And, as Amy Pope had done before her, she stalked away out of the room without one backward glance.

Lord Axmuthy, agape, stared after her, stirring his tea, the while, with a blind energy that sent it splashing to the saucer. At last, he spoke.

"By Jove!" he said. "How strange!"

"But, Janet," her mother said to her, next day; "if we do have this supper we shall have to ask Lord Axmuthy."

"Why?" Janet's tone was mutinous.

"On Ronald's account, if for nothing else."

"He isn't Ronald's guest."

"No, not exactly; but —"

However, Janet interrupted.

"And he certainly doesn't minister to Ronald's comfort, especially where Amy is concerned."

"No; but —"

"And he's bound to be horrid to Jack."

This time, her mother's words struck home.

"Unless you are enough of a hostess to prevent it," she said gently. "Those things usually can be avoided, with a little tact."

Janet's sigh was acquiescent. Then she mutinied once more.

"I hate tact," she said. "It's only varnishing down the slivers. I'd rather go to work and plane them off and have them done with."

Mrs. Leslie smiled up into the eyes beside her.

"That takes more time, sometimes a good deal more

time than one can get. Meanwhile, isn't it better to hold the slivers down, where they can't do any harm?"

"Ye-es." Janet, balanced on the arm of her mother's chair, swayed gently to and fro during a thoughtful moment. "I suppose you're right, Mummy; you generally are," she said, with a regretful sigh. "Still, once in a while, it would do my soul very much good, if I might just punch his lordship."

"Ronald says he's very kind, and the soul of honour," her mother reminded her.

"Ronald is an angel," Janet retorted. "Being that, he sees things with angelic eyes."

Her mother shook her head.

"Ronald is a man, dearie," she corrected. "He sees things as a man should do, broadly. He forgets Lord Axmuthy's odd ways, beside the real good there is in him."

Janet sighed once more.

"If only he weren't so preposterous!" she said.

And her mother, hearing, forebore to disagree. Down in her secret heart, moreover, she was well pleased that Janet should hold to this unsentimental opinion of her son's employer.

Now, after a little interval, she changed the subject.

"Janet," she asked; "what was worrying Amy, yesterday afternoon?"

"Lord Axmuthy," Janet made answer promptly. "He was enough to worry a snail. I know Amy rather well, Mummy, a good deal better than I am supposed to do; and I expected, any minute, that she'd turn

around and box his ears. She was longing to do it. I saw it in her eyes."

"Yes." Mrs. Leslie's assent held its own degree of reservation, born of her keen-eyed study of Amy's face, while the plans for the next week had been announced. Amy had smiled; but, underneath her smile, she had looked worried, troubled. "Yes. But why?"

"Obviously, because he's he, and always bound to be." Then Janet shifted from the dangerous ground. "And you really think you'll have the supper? Aren't you a darling?"

Mrs. Leslie's laugh was girlish enough to match her slim, lithe figure, her bright face; girlish enough, too, to disavow the daughter who still sat, balancing to and fro upon the chair arm. Indeed, seen side by side as they were now, Janet's keen, intent face looked scarcely younger than did the carefree, merry one beside it. Mrs. Leslie had known her sorrows, her worries, had even, for a year or two, known hard, grinding work. None the less, all in all the years had dealt gently with her. Now, moreover, her house a proved success, her daughter growing to a womanhood of brilliant promise, and her only son come back to her from England, she was completely happy, and, what was more, she was not ashamed to show it.

Janet's quick ear, however, caught an ominous note in the laughter, a note that always went with maternal teasing.

"What now?" she demanded, seizing her mother

by the chin and gazing steadily into her eyes. "Out with it."

"With what?"

"Your iniquity. You are planning something sinful, Mummy. I know that laugh of yours too well; it always means mischief. 'Fess up."

"Don't choke me, then. Else, I can't tell you." Mrs. Leslie settled her collar with one hand, while she slid the other one about her daughter's waist. "I really think, if the boys come, I'll have a little supper party for you and Ronald, Janet. It will seem quite like the old times at home. Of course, we want Amy, and we can't help having Lord Axmuthy. Besides —"

"Well?" Janet urged her past the pause.

"Then, just to balance up the table properly, I think I shall ask Phyllis to come down."

"Phil!" Janet nearly tumbled off the chair arm, so great was her surprise. "Phil Stayre! Mummy Leslie, do you wot what you are doing?"

"I think so, Janet." Mrs. Leslie's face never lost its smile. "She knows them all a little; it would be a compliment to Sidney to ask her. Besides, Janet, Phyllis needs to get an invitation now and then. It will give her a little more self-confidence."

"Self-confidence!" Janet gasped. "Do you think Phil Stayre ever has the slightest doubt of her ability to — to entertain King Edward?" Then the question, begun in earnest, lost itself in a little chuckle of pure fun. "I imagine she would entertain him, too, once she got about it," Janet added. Then she returned to

the charge. "What makes you think Phil lacks self-confidence?"

"Because she tries so hard to cover up the fact," Mrs. Leslie answered. "She has won, and deserved, the reputation of an ugly duckling, and now she goes on living up to it, because she doesn't dare let anybody know how it hurts her. The best thing in the world for Phyllis would be to wake up, some fine morning, and find out she was famous."

"It would make her unendurable," Janet predicted. But Mrs. Leslie shook her head.

"Phyllis is like a good many other girls," she told her daughter. "She will live up to almost any reputation that she happens to get. A certain amount of spoiling is good for everybody, I believe. Therefore," the arm about Janet's waist tightened just a little; "I am going to ask Phyllis to our supper; and, what's more, I'm going to put her next to Ronald at the table."

"Poor old Ronald!" Janet protested, as she rose to go. "I hope you'll put Amy on the other side, then. Time for work, Mummy," she added, as she bent to kiss her mother. "Never mind, though. Next year at this time, I sha'n't have a thing to do but talk."

"Are you sorry, Janet?" her mother asked her, a little fearful as to what would be the answer.

The answer came without an instant's hesitation.

"Yes, and no, Mummy. Yes, sorry because I have enjoyed it here and shall hate the feeling that it's going on without me. No, because the stopping will bring me so much nearer my real work. You know I started

out for just one thing: to finish up the work my father left behind. Else, do you suppose I'd have taken all this," her gesture explained her swift, earnest words; "all this out of you and Ronald? My only hope is that, some day, I can prove to you I have deserved it all." Then, already half ashamed of the momentary emotion which had broken down her usual reserve, she once more kissed her mother, this time quite silently, and went away out of the room and down the stairs.

And Mrs. Leslie, looking after her, acknowledged to herself that she was satisfied with what the college life had done for her young daughter. Janet never would be popular; probably she never would be prominent among the girls of her own class. Nevertheless, she was more patient, broader-minded and infinitely more gracious than she had been at the start. Of her honour and her intellect, there had never been a question.

Just one week later, Mrs. Leslie had her supper party; and Janet, flanked on either hand by Jack and Rob, could not find it in her heart to grudge to Phyllis the slender pleasure she appeared to find in the merry little function. To be sure, in her heart of hearts Phyllis had been overjoyed to find her freshman self included in the senior revel. She showed her joy but scantily, however; but, although she did her level best to maintain the impression that she accepted the invitation solely out of regard to Mrs. Leslie's happiness, she was quite unable to keep up her gruff condescension to the end. It was impossible for even Phyllis not to laugh at some of the nonsense the boys tossed back and forth

between themselves, not to enjoy some of the chaff aimed at the other girls, not to have a sense of gratified vanity when she discovered that her hair, arranged by Day's clever hands, was patterned after that of Amy, and, furthermore, was more abundant, that the slip for her best muslin gown matched to a shade the decorations of the table, decorations which Mrs. Leslie, knowing full well the slenderness of Phyllis's wardrobe, had chosen to that very end.

Moreover, she had liked her seat, between Mrs. Leslie and Ronald, and with Day across the table to send her a little word every now and then. Ronald, instructed in the part he was to play, after one pathetic glance towards Amy, had manfully devoted himself to the entertainment of his dour young neighbour. So skillfully had he managed it, so good was he to look at, and so unwonted in the life of Phyllis was his little air of eager interest in her concerns that the girl forgot herself completely. By the time that the supper was half over, she was talking with a frank intelligence and ease which caused her sister, farther down the table, to forget her interest in Jack and turn to listen with a pride which was comically manifest to all the others, looking on.

Janet was in her glory, too, her brown eyes gleaming with mirth and her cheeks flushed pink with excitement, pink as her silken bridesmaid gown which she had donned in honour of the great event. Between herself and Rob the fun was ceaseless, ceaseless the sparring and the merry byplay of look and gesture which eked out the spoken word, ceaseless the hilarious reminis-

cence. Now and then it overflowed to take in Jack and Sidney; now and then it caught Ronald in its tide, or else swept completely around the table to break in upon Day's quiet talk with Mrs. Leslie, quite at the other end. At such instants, Mrs. Leslie lifted her head to look across the group of happy faces. Then she smiled contentedly to herself. Her little supper was proving an unalloyed success, it seemed to her. There were but two quiet spots at the table, both unexpected, neither of them causing her much anxiety. Lord Axmuthy, at Day's right hand, was bolting his food in a nervous silence, keeping, the while, a wary eye on Phyllis, as if fearful lest she take summary vengeance on him for some untimely word. Across the table beside Ronald, Amy Pope was unaccountably quiet. However, Ronald had told her of the little plot regarding Phyllis, and Rob, at Amy's other hand, was kept busy answering Janet's sallies. Mrs. Leslie, then, noting the girl's unwonted stillness, set it down as the result of chance, and not of any great account.

Rob Argyle noticed it, too, however, noticed it not only at the table, but later on, when they all sat grouped around the open fire in the white-panelled living-room across the hall. It was not like Amy Pope to be so pensive, he told himself; not like her in the least to fail to rally and fling back the chaff he turned upon her. Plainly she was not to be aroused in any such way as this. Plainly something or other was amiss with her. Under cover of his talk with Sidney, Rob watched the girl with kindly eyes. Then, with a plea about the hot-

ness of the hickory logs, he pushed aside his chair and went to join her in her corner.

Later on, when he and Jack were in their room at the Inn, he fell to wondering audibly about the matter.

"It isn't like her to be so quiet," he said, after he had summed up the evening's events and dwelt a little upon Amy's unusual silence. "She generally can be counted on to hold her own. In fact, I never knew her miss it before. Something or other must be wrong. I say, Jack," he looked over at his friend with steady, true blue eyes; "what do you suppose the trouble is?"

There was a little bit of silence. Then Jack answered.

"Rob, I wish I knew," he said, and, as he spoke, his own keen eyes were clouded.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

“ALL faculty,” as she spoke, Day tentatively stuck in a hairpin, lifted her brows inquiringly, then drove the hairpin home. “All faculty,” she iterated then; “is divided into two parts: those who shake their forefingers at you, and those who poke their fists into their pockets. Personally, I prefer the latter. They are less self-conscious.”

“Day,” Sidney spoke from the bed where she had thrown herself down to rest after a stormy class meeting where, by the time the questions involved had been laid upon the table, Sidney had reached the point of wishing she could lay herself beside them; “according to your maturer notions, how much do the faculty really count up here?”

Day turned from the mirror where she was completing the process of beautifying herself for dinner.

“To themselves, or to us?” she inquired composedly.

“Both. Either.”

“Lots to themselves and, I suppose, to each other.” Day faced back again and went on with the beautifying process at her leisure. “To us — Well, to put it very courteously, not quite so much as they congratulate themselves they do. When I was a callow freshman, I used to think of them as sitting on a peak of high

Olympus, each one armed with a vast wooden spoon and stirring up the senior intellect. We didn't get any of the stirring. I supposed then it was because we were too young. But now — Are the green beads or the pendant prettier with this gown? ”

“The beads, you thing of vanity! They match. But what about now? ”

With leisurely hands, Day clasped the beads about her neck. Then she smiled down at Sidney.

“Like all perspectives, it has moved along,” she said. “They still keep up a mighty stirring with their wooden spoons; but, as long as we seniors don't appear to feel it, I have come to the conclusion that they must be stirring up each other. Sidney Stayre,” she added, with a sudden change of tone; “I sometimes actually believe that, granted the wisdom and the spirit of holiness within the President, we girls could almost educate ourselves.”

Sidney yawned.

“Day, that's heresy. Also nonsense.”

“I am not so sure,” Day answered wilfully. “Of course, it depends a little, though, on what you mean by education. If you want to teach, or get Ph. D.'s and things like that, then I suppose the faculty are bound to be of some use. For those of us that are just up here, learning how to live, though — Really, there's more use in one of Mother Leslie's little table talks than in a dozen lectures. Mrs. Pope was another. She stirred us up, and made us do any amount of thinking.”

“So does any mother that's worth the having,”

Sidney made idle comment, for she was a good deal too tired, that afternoon, to discuss anything very profoundly.

Day, on the other hand, fresh from the class meeting where she had had all of the fun of argument and none of the responsibility, was in a mood for philosophical discussion. Accordingly, she proceeded with her theme.

"Look at Amy Pope herself," she was beginning, when a sudden knock smote upon the door. Day abandoned her argument hastily, and assumed the duties of hostess. "Come in," she said.

The door opened, and Phyllis stalked across the threshold. From her manner of repressed excitement, it was plain that she had tidings to impart.

"Where is Sidney?" she demanded.

Day pointed to the bed.

"Over there."

"Sick?"

Sidney stuck up her head from among the parti-coloured pillows.

"No; only dead tired with the vagaries of my beloved class," she answered. "Phil, take an older sister's advice, and never run for senior president."

"I'm not likely to be asked, and you know you love it," Phyllis made uncompromising answer. "If you don't like it, you're perfectly able to resign."

"My duty to my class," Sidney murmured, with mock sanctity.

"Fudge!" Phyllis crossed the room and took pos-

session of the most uneasy chair the room afforded.

"What are you girls doing?"

"I was dressing." Day pirouetted about the room, her arms lifted to exhibit her sleeves for inspection.

"Don't I look nice? And Sidney, I devoutly hope," she added pointedly; "is just about to dress."

Sidney nuzzled her head down among the pillows.

"Time enough," she protested. "I tell you I am weary."

Phyllis stiffened herself in her chair.

"Too weary to hear some news?" she queried brusquely.

"Not if it's good news, or else exciting," Sidney answered, with a smothered yawn.

Phyllis glanced across at the table, as if taking inventory of its contents. Apparently satisfied at what she did not see, she turned back again to Sidney.

"It is good for somebody," she said guardedly; "and—for that somebody, I shouldn't wonder if it was a little bit exciting."

"Go ahead, then," Sidney ordered her colloquially.

Phyllis did go ahead, but deviously and by means of another question.

"Seen the *Monthly*?" she inquired.

"No; not yet. Has ours come, Day?"

"I haven't seen it," Day made nonchalant answer, for now she knew what was coming, although not the whole of it.

Phyllis seemed loath to break the pause, and Sidney stirred her with a question.

“What of the *Monthly*, Phil?”

Phyllis laid a row of box-plaits in the skirt of her brown frock. Then she smoothed down her hair. Then she cleared her throat.

“Nothing, only I’ve got a story in it,” she said curtly.

“Phil Stayre!” With a bounce, Sidney was off the bed, across the room and on her sister’s neck, for Janet and Day had kept their secret well, and Phyllis’s surprise was perfect. “Phil, you darling!”

Phyllis submitted to the hugging with a fair amount of grace; but at the epithet she made swift rebellion.

“I’m no especial darling, Sidney; and it’s a very disagreeable story. At least, I meant it to be.”

Sidney gave one final hug which wellnigh stopped her sister’s breath for ever.

“Oh, Phil, I am so proud!” she said, between the hugs.

“There’s nothing for you to be proud of, Sidney. I wrote it, and they took it and put it in. That’s all there is about it.”

“But I am proud, Phil,” Sidney protested. “Any girl would be, to have her sister do a thing like that. Day, where do you suppose our *Monthly* is?”

“Under the bed,” Day answered tranquilly.

“The — bed?”

“Yes, mine. I told Janet to put it there, before I saw it at all. I didn’t want to fib too badly, and we both were bound that Phil should tell you, herself.”

“You knew it, then, both of you?” Sidney looked up sharply.

Phyllis took it on herself to do the answering.

"Janet's an editor," she said indifferently. "As for Day," her voice changed abruptly, grew more gentle; "I'm not sure I ever should have done it, if it hadn't been for her."

Day stooped suddenly to smooth out the rug at her feet, for she was loath to have even Sidney's friendly eyes discover the two hot tears that came into her own eyes, as she listened to the curt, honest words of Phyllis. Later, she wondered a little if all her college life would not have been well worth the while, for the sake of that one ungracious recognition of her friendly zeal.

Sidney, meanwhile, had fallen on all fours and was half buried from sight beneath the bed.

"You may as well save your energy, Sidney. I have a copy here," Phyllis advised her, still a little curtly. Then she added, with apparent carelessness, "They've given me first place."

This time, Day fell upon her.

"Phil! You blessed old thing! How splendid!"

Phyllis tried her level best to look very bored; she only succeeded, however, in looking very self-conscious.

"You needn't make such a fuss as that over it," she told them. "I've something a good deal more exciting than that to tell you."

"Go on!" Day, heedless of her gown, plumped herself on the floor at the feet of Phyllis, and turned to face her expectantly.

Once more Phyllis made a futile effort after nonchalance.

"It's not so much, perhaps, after all; only I was rather pleased," she modified her previous words. "I was passing the Hatfield just now, and She —" there was no especial need for Phyllis to add the name, supplied equally by tone and context; "called me in and congratulated me."

"What did she say?" Sidney demanded hungrily.

And the verdict Phyllis quoted would not have appeared as satisfactory to a lay outsider as to the owner of literary aspirations.

"She said it was the roughest thing she ever saw, bald and crude and careless, but she told me to go on and do another, and then, as soon as I had learned to know a little more, to do a whole lot of others. I've got to learn to live like a sane woman, before I can begin to be a writer; but she's sure the time will come when, if I want, I can be."

The last words came tumbling out of Phyllis's mouth in a chaotic torrent; but Sidney's pride in her sister, her real love, supplied the clue to their meaning. During a little pause, she stood at the side of Phyllis's chair, smoothing the brown stuff shoulder with fingers that itched to caress something a little bit more personal. Day, meanwhile, still sitting on the floor with her hands clasped about her knees, beamed up at them both contentedly. To her mind, now that the first, worst step was taken, the future of Phyllis was assured. Even so slight a matter as a single story could not fail to bring

to the girl some sort of recognition; and Day shared Mrs. Leslie's belief that recognition was the thing that Phyllis Stayre most needed, needed no less because she would have died a dozen deaths rather than take one single step directly to attain it.

Sidney's hand fell to her side at last, and she dropped down beside Day, with a happy little sigh.

"Won't father and mother be delighted!" she said slowly.

Day turned to face her with a smile.

"Sidney," she said; "I verily believe you care more about this than you did for being president."

And Sidney answered without hesitation, —

"Of course, Day. This counts for ever and ever so much more. That came just because I could get on with a lot of girls; but this is something out of Phil's very self."

Day, however, in her secret heart, refused to accept the nice discrimination.

"I think," Phyllis announced, after a short pause; "if it won't seem too conceited, I'll send a copy down to Wade."

"Of course," Sidney assented promptly. "It would be a shame not to. He will be ever so proud, and Irene can tell him what the *Monthly* really stands for."

"And," Phyllis went on, heedless of the interruption; "I think perhaps I'll send another one to Jack Blanchard."

"Why Jack especially?" Sidney asked her.

Phyllis hesitated, blushed to the rims of her great

spectacles, divested now of their black yarn pads. It was not easy for her to speak out before two hearers even when one was Sidney and the other one was Day. None the less, an unwonted mood of confidential frankness lay upon her.

"Because," she blurted out at last; "I told Jack, ever so long ago, that time he was burned, you know?" She paused and lifted her eyes to make sure that the memory lasted for the others as well as for herself.

"Yes." Day nodded. "Well?"

"Told him I'd make sure that some day he'd say it had been worth his while," Phyllis continued, with a hasty effort to slur over any sentimental meaning of the phrase. "If I send him down the story, it may just remind him of the promise; that's all."

And then, for just a little while, silence descended upon the room.

It was now the first of March, and the Easter holidays were in sight. Winter was breaking fast. Snow and ice were giving place to much rain and to bottomless mud. Clouds lay thick upon the two little mountains at the south of the town, and the meadows were a lake grown from the river's overflow, a lake filled with swirling eddies and fringed with logs and rubbish which gathered thickly in the stagnant backwaters below the bluff that edged the town. The season was, all things considered, the most unlovely one of all the circling year. Nevertheless, the seniors clung lovingly to each passing day. The completion of their passing would

bring Easter and the holidays. That, in its turn, would be followed by the coming of the summer term, loveliest of all terms to the under classes, saddest of all to seniors for whom the end is then almost in sight.

Even into the term preceding, a tinge of sadness had crept backward. Every now and then, some minor event pointed mercilessly forward to those final days in June. Every now and then, some college function marked itself in plain italics as being the last time for them. Next year, who would stand in the front left-hand corner of the gymnasium floor for rally? Next year, who would — dozens and dozens of things? Forgetful of the fact that their turn must so soon follow, the seniors, in those days of breaking winter, were prone to bend their envious gaze upon the juniors. For them, at least, the fun was only fun, and quite unmingled with foreboding.

And yet, even in those latter days of winter with the end almost in sight, the senior life was by no means all keyed to a melancholy minor. There were absorbing interests of every sort and description; days of excitement when the routine of the college almost lost its significance beneath the buzz of talk which heralded some new sensation, a buzz which subsided always as suddenly as it had arisen; days when the vast machine rolled smoothly onward, frictionless and never mightier than in its greatest stillness. And there were other days, holidays, mid-years and Rally Day, and that other day, unnoticed by the faculty, when the college arrays

itself in green and yellow and, between lectures and beforehand, sallies forth to the fray: there were these other days when the whole place was given up to traditional and lawful revelry. There are suppers, too, varying in formality from impromptu spreads to full-dress functions down at the Copper Kettle or the Rose Tree Inn. There are the division plays, when guests put on their frilly frocks and go to wake the echoes of the Student Building with their well-merited applause. There has been skating down in Paradise, and an occasional mild effort upon snow shoes. There is an occasional trip to Springfield, too; and there is the unending tide of petty hospitalities which go on among the girls and from house to house. Under no conditions can the college life be termed monotonous, unless a girl makes wilful effort to convert herself into the likeness of a hermit crab.

Since mid-years, Day and Sidney and even Amy Pope had flung themselves headlong into the class tide. Other friends would last for other years. The class, unbroken and united in its interests, was now at best a thing of months. They would make the very most, then, of those months. Janet, perforce, was giving a more divided allegiance to the spirit of her class. Not that she was the less loyal to its true traditions; but, of necessity, she felt the disturbing presence of her brother, and even, to a less degree, of her brother's eccentric employer, Lord Axmuthy. Ronald, by the kindness of his lordship, was lingering there in the staid old town until her commencement should be over. To a stranger and an alien,

like either one of the two boys, resources for entertainment were but few. Accordingly, Janet gave to them what spare hours she could, to the one by reason of her gratitude for his continued kindness to her brother, to the other from sheer pleasure in his presence. And with Ronald, Amy Pope, oftenest of any of the girls, came to Janet's aid.

To Janet, watching, anxious for Ronald's content and entertainment, it seemed that Amy Pope was marvellously unselfish in those winter days. Janet's shrewd young brain held few illusions. She was quite well aware that Amy never had cared enthusiastically for herself. She was also well aware that Amy, in these latter days, was busy even to the point of distraction. The play had ceased to be a future plan and had become a present fact. Swiftly and impartially as she was able, Amy was busy nowadays in sorting out the candidates for parts, preparatory to their final trials by the coach. Her days were spent in interviews, not all of them too pleasant; she went to bed at night, a pencil and a pad of paper underneath her pillow. She arose at dawn to tumble headlong into her clothes and dash off, breakfastless, in search of some aspirant for dramatic fame who had eluded her, the day before. And, with all this, the stern necessity of her position entailed a due attention to her lectures; a loyalty to her house and class demanded of her a due measure of time for a round dozen of other interests totally disconnected with dramatics. In all truth, the life of a senior celebrity, as the year draws to its

climax, lacks somewhat upon the score of restfulness.

Under all these conditions, it seemed to Janet Leslie little short of the marvellous that Amy Pope should have left over any odds and ends of time for Ronald. Nevertheless, in some way best known to herself, the girl achieved it, achieved it when his older friends, Sidney and Day Argyle, told him quite frankly that their hours were full to overflowing, that they must wait until their Easter holidays when they all would be together in New York, to make up their arrears of conversation. Amy, on the other hand, always contrived to be at home when Ronald called; always contrived to be at leisure when he demanded a walk, or suggested a wish to take her back with him for a cup of his mother's tea; always contrived, no matter what her worries, to be her frank and merry self whenever Ronald Leslie came within her sight. And Ronald, appreciating all this to the full, did his level best not to abuse his privilege, not to tire her out by his insistent demands upon her time. Asked, he would have given unhesitating answer that, for one occasion that he saw and talked with Amy, he would have liked a dozen. And yet they saw each other almost daily, meeting upon the street, or inside the campus, or by way of Mrs. Leslie for whom Amy Pope had never lost her old-time freshman allegiance.

However, strange to say, in all this time, and by all these frequent meetings, any real intimacy between Janet and Amy seemed as far off as ever. Accordingly, on this same March afternoon of Phyllis's narration of

her news, it was to the room of Day and Sidney, not of Amy Pope, that Janet took herself. She walked more rapidly than usual, her chin erect, her brown eyes on fire with the importance of her errand.

"Come!" Once more it was Day who called out in answer to her knock.

Janet flung the door open and walked in. Then, just inside the threshold, she halted to survey the group before her: Phyllis enthroned upon a chair, with Day and Sidney sitting at her feet.

"Well!" she said. "What's going on here? A love feast?"

Sidney looked up, her gray eyes still alight with pride.

"We're rejoicing over Phil," she said.

Janet nodded.

"Splendid; isn't it? I am so glad about it that I don't half know what to say. Keep it up, Phyllis. You've the stuff in you." Then she turned back to her two classmates, seated on the floor. "Are there any rejoicings left over to spill on me?" she demanded quaintly.

"Yes, oceans." Sidney caught her by the hand and dragged her down into her lap. "Out with your good news, Janet! What is it now?"

"Nothing, only," even as Phyllis had done, Janet sought to tell her tidings nonchalantly; but her voice betrayed her, and her eyes, betrayed her sheer, throbbing joy in her own bit of glorious news; "only — I'm *Puck*."

"Janet!"

And then, in their delight, they fell upon her and made much of her to their hearts' content. After all said and done, it is the old, old friend and her well-earned glories that count the most.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

“**B**UT don’t you know, now honestly?” Rob burst out.

The words might have answered to Jack’s final phrase, spoken the night of Mrs. Leslie’s supper party. As a matter of fact, however, they were uttered late on Easter eve, when the two friends had gone upstairs after an evening spent at the Wade Winthrops’.

“Come in,” Rob had said hospitably, as he halted on the threshold of his room, the original and becoming blue of whose decorations had long since lost itself beneath a wealth of crimson banners and plump silk sofa pillows.

Jack had yawned and demurred a little.

“It must be all hours of the night.”

“It’s not; it’s to-morrow morning. The mischief is already done. You may as well come inside and have a gossip.”

“Disturb somebody.”

“Disturb the great-grandmother of the seven sleepers! Besides, there isn’t anybody else on our side of the house but Leslie, and he isn’t given to being wakeful. I know; because I can check him up by his snores. I always could, away back in Quebec.”

Jack flung himself into a great arm chair.

"You don't mean that that thing of beauty sleeps out loud?" he questioned.

Rob chuckled.

"They are the sort that always do. I'm surprised, Jack, that such a fact escaped your notice, after all your experience of the dormant public."

Jack shook his head.

"It generally was the little fat ones who made the worst disturbance. The lean giants like Leslie were immune, as a rule. Rob, I can't seem to get on with Leslie?"

"Because he snores?" Rob queried flippantly, while he slid out of his dinner coat and dived into his closet in search of something softer to replace it. "He's good, Jack, all good. In fact, I sometimes think he is a lot too good for us."

Jack dismissed that phase of the question.

"I never saw a brother and sister so totally unlike," he remarked at the visible portion of Rob's shoulder blades. "He's as smooth and suave as she is wilful."

"*She* meaning Janet?" Rob reappeared, his housecoat in his hand. "For my part," he made a little grimace at some recollection born of the evening's conversation; "I consider Janet Leslie the most wontful person that I ever knew."

Jack laughed.

"Her wrath is like the lightning, Rob. One never knows where it will strike next."

"Or when," Rob added ruefully. "I found that out, some time ago; and, methinks, you've had a sample

package of it, too. To-night, though, I meant to be extra good, for Day had been lecturing me on my duties to my guests."

"Yours? They're hers," Jack said flatly.

"Mine by courtesy, as long as it's all in the family. Besides, Ronald and I were supposed to be good friends, in the dear old days in Louis Street."

"Were you?" Jack questioned keenly.

"We - el, mm! That depends," Rob gave evasive answer. "Day always cared for him more than I did."

Jack bent forward to stare at a microscopic cut in his left thumb.

"And does now?" he inquired, without looking up. Rob laughed.

"Bet you!" he said profanely. Then, without warning, he shifted the talk. "Jack," he asked, and Jack, had he been looking up, would have noted the steady gaze of Rob's blue eyes whence, for the instant, the fun had died away; "what is the row between you and Amy Pope?"

The suddenness of the question took Jack completely off his guard. Nevertheless, he rallied swiftly, swiftly fenced.

"Row, Rob?"

"Yes, row," Rob persisted. "Something has gone wrong between you. You used to be all sorts of friends."

"Aren't we now?" Jack queried, with a smile.

"Not on your life. You don't fight; but neither do you chum," Rob told him bluntly.

The smile still curved Jack's thin, firm lips, as he answered, —

“ I don't know any reason that we shouldn't.”

But the smile was matched by no gleam from the steady eyes above.

And then it was that Rob, watching his old friend closely, noting the fixed smile, and the grave and honest eyes, had burst out with the question which he so often had longed to ask, the question which, he knew full well, Jack Blanchard would in all probability be the last man in the world to answer.

None the less, he did answer it; and, at the finish, Rob's blue eyes were as grave as were the level brown ones, now looking into his without a hint of reservation.

“ I don't see what else you could have done,” he said slowly, after Jack had ended speaking.

“ I didn't, myself,” Jack made thoughtful answer. “ There was just the thin little edge of a danger. I suppose I was an utter cad to think of it, and a worse one to speak of it to you. However, I have kept still about it for a good while, and I do generally end by telling you most things.”

For a moment, Rob's muscular fist lay on Jack's fingers, in token that he understood. Then, —

“ About the rest,” he added; “ one never can count too much on the next man's feelings; but my advice to you is to go in and win.”

“ And, if I lose? ”

“ You'll lose,” Rob assured him practically.

“ That, and most other things at the same time.”

“Not necessarily.”

“The good of them, though,” Jack persisted gravely. Then he lifted his eyes once more to rest them on the face of his best, his well-tried friend. “Rob Argyle,” he spoke with sudden energy; “what do you think I have been working for, all these past months?”

Manlike though he was, virile in every thread of his young nature, Rob’s smile was very sweet, as he made slow answer, —

“The thing you’re going to get in the long run, old man. At least, I hope so.”

After the stress and strain of senior year, the Easter holidays were proving a welcome interlude. Irene Winthrop had been mainly responsible for the way in which they were being spent. Irene had been through it all, two years before; she knew quite well that much of the summer term’s enjoyment would depend upon the total break at Easter. Accordingly, as soon as she found out that the Leslies were to be the Argyles’ guests, she had sent notes to Amy Pope and Paul Addison, begging them to come down to New York, partly to see her housekeeping in her new home, partly that, all together once more, they might renew some of the old associations of the preceding summer.

Paul and Amy, nothing loath, had accepted Irene’s invitation, the one by telegram, the other in a special-delivery letter. Two days later, they arrived by the same train, squabbling hilariously, according to their wonted fashion, as they came. Whatever the months might have wrought by way of change among the others,

it was plain to Irene, looking on, that the old bond between Paul and Amy had held good, unchanged and still unbroken.

Next morning, however, Paul had a surprise in waiting for Irene.

"I say, step-sister-in-law-as-is," he observed, strolling in upon her at her desk, where she sat answering a dozen notes; "where in your plans does Phil come in?"

"Phil?"

"Yes, Phil. I want her about to play with me, when Amy is busy."

"But she doesn't belong to the old clan, Paul," Irene remonstrated.

"Mayhaps. In that case, old clan be hanged!" he observed ungratefully. "Besides, we're one short, anyway, with Amy Browne in London. Meanwhile, I want Phil to play with, as I told you."

"Phil doesn't play; she is a good deal too strenuous for that."

"I'll teach her, then." Paul stuck his fists into his pockets. "I can teach a pink gorilla how to gambol, once I set about it."

"What about Amy?" Irene reminded him. "I brought you down here to play with her and keep her from getting bored."

"Amy has Ronald, alack! Mighty poor taste on her part to strain the muscles of her neck, looking up at that clothes pole. However, step-sister-in-law, that's nothing to the point. I want Phil. I like her; she isn't cloying with her sweet little ways, and she sets the rafters to

jingling when she walks across the room. Nevertheless, I like her. She's as refreshing as an ice-locked tub in January."

And so it came to pass that Phyllis was included in a good many of their plans.

Quite prominent among these plans had been Irene's little dinner, given on Easter eve. The next week, she was well aware, the Argyles and their guests would be caught in the whirl of after-Easter gayeties. It was best, all things considered, to serve her dinner as a sort of Lenten penance. She had made her plans accordingly; but the penance had been such an absolute success that it had been prolonged until Lent itself was over.

At one point only had Irene's plans barely escaped a wreck. According to her observations made the preceding summer, coupled with the somewhat hazy impression she had gained at the time of her own wedding, Irene, quite as a matter of course, had given Jack the place next Amy Pope. She had counted upon those two to form a focus for all the talk and fun of the entire table. To her intense surprise, the fun came only out of Rob and Sidney. Jack was very quiet, and Amy was wellnigh dumb. Her dumbness, it was plain, came from no mood of waywardness, however. The girl had never been gentler than she was, that night at table, had never been more girlishly sweet than in her unwonted quiet. She gave to Jack her full attention, as long as they sat together at the table; she showed to him a pretty deference, smiled at his jokes and listened to his stories. Now and then she lifted her eyes to his, and their expression

was a little bit appealing, very full of question; but the old froth and sparkle were completely gone.

If Jack noticed it, or missed it, he gave no sign. He merely talked on, in his old, accustomed friendly way, only a little bit more gravely. A stranger, looking on, would have set them down as mere acquaintances who had met but twice or thrice before, and then under the most depressing circumstances. Irene was plainly mystified, rather annoyed; but Rob Argyle, across the table, looked into his friend's brown eyes and read there a hint of regretful sorrow which made him manifestly anxious. To conceal his anxiety, however, as well as to veil Jack's obvious discomfort, Rob flung himself into the spirit of the occasion as Irene had planned it, not only flung himself, but dragged Sidney in headlong after him, while by degrees he swept the table with them into a mood of mirth and held them there until Amy's dumb gentleness and Jack's discomfort had dropped completely out of sight.

Later, when they left the table, Rob took it upon his own broad shoulders to make the evening an unqualified success. With that end in view, he had gone limping to and fro across Irene's small drawing-room, breaking up the groups as fast as they were formed, rearranging them to his liking, only to stir them up again, and leaving behind him a train of merry nonsense that once for all rendered dumb gentleness an absolute impossibility. Paul, never dense, was not slow to catch the meaning of Rob's mood, and proved an able second. By the time the evening was well under way, Irene had the satis-

faction of feeling the danger point was in the past. Even the causes of the danger appeared to have repented of their evil ways. Amy, as much of the time as Rob would leave her in peace, was now quite absorbed in Ronald Leslie, plying the dignified Canadian with jokes and chatter which had reacted on herself until she seemed once more the saucy, independent Amy whom they all knew and liked so well. Jack, meanwhile, after a glance at Day, engrossed in grave discussion with Wade Winthrop, had betaken himself in search of Janet Leslie.

In fact, during those Easter holidays, Jack had developed a habit of taking himself in search of Janet. As guest of the house which he long since had learned to consider home, she was bound to make some slight demands upon his attention and his time. Moreover, as a rule, Janet was in her best, her sweetest mood just then. Now and then she sparred with Rob a little bit too seriously for the comfort of the onlookers; now and then she turned on Day a little sharply. For the most part, however, she sheathed her claws and offered to all comers the friendly paw of a gentle pussy-cat. Jack, strangely quiet in those Easter holidays, was finding Janet his best comrade.

She was as downright as Amy, but far more uncompromising. She allowed it to be seen quite plainly by her companion of the moment that he was only for the moment, only an incident quite subordinate to the main ends and aims of her existence. However, at her best, Janet was not lacking in girlish charm. She had a certain wit, a certain brilliancy at times that was danger-

ously near to beauty. Her charm was in no way diminished by her little air of being quite sufficient unto herself. Instinctively her companion of the moment realized that he must do his best to render himself a necessity to her complete content. Jack Blanchard was no exception to the rule. It would have given him an honest pleasure to feel that Janet Leslie liked him, depended on him, asked his judgment. Just once or twice, early in their acquaintance, they had seemed to be nearing this relation. Then had come the friction and the open strife of the preceding summer; and, since that time, Jack had accepted the apparent peace between them as being the merest truce, a truce liable to be broken at any instant. Now, to his extreme surprise, he was discovering in the present Janet more than a trace of his old-time girl friend, docile and ready to do her share to please.

On this account, Jack had found it the more easy to drop into the habit of seeking Janet, every now and then, for a little talk. She was a good talker, too; but a far better listener. Before he was quite aware of the fact, Jack caught the trick of talking to her frankly of himself, of his present interests, even of that past life which had been a sealed book between them. Janet heard him out with an intent consideration of his facts and of his point of view. In the end, moreover, she came to share his point of view far more than, a year ago, she would have deemed possible. The past year had broadened Janet Leslie, not only with its struggle and its work, but even more by means of its present promise

of a little bit of fame. Janet Leslie, the class nonentity and grind, was a wholly different person from Janet Leslie, the potential *Puck*. Nowadays, certain elements of graciousness befitted her, whereas heretofore they had been negligible advantages, like any other misfit costume.

Together, then, she and Jack discussed all things: New York and Canada and Smith, discussed the fate of railroads and of the senior play. Janet advised Jack regarding the furnishings for his new office; Jack instructed Janet in military manœuvres, as manifested in the Battle of the Plains, and warned her, out of his own practical experience of battlefields, of certain of the errors that beset the path of the historian. In spite of Jack's occasional fun and of Janet's quaint wit, their talk was nearly always serious; it held nothing of the flashing, teasing merriment that had marked Jack's earlier conversations with Amy Pope. Perhaps he found it the more restful, for all that.

This particular evening at Irene's had been no exception to the rule. Jack and Janet, sitting a little apart from the others, had fallen into grave discussion of certain absorbing themes quite alien to the gay scene around them, alien to their two resplendent selves. Jack was as starchy as Janet was frilly, that night; and their combined appearance was ludicrously out of keeping with certain words which they let fall: *Forlorn hope, shot down, carried to the rear, retreat*. Amy, across the room with Ronald at her side, paused in the middle of her chaff to cast a glance over at the two Canadians, so

obviously blind and deaf to all around them. Then she flung herself into her talk with Ronald more eagerly than ever, while, bit by bit, the scarlet stain of excitement crept up over her cheeks, and her eyes were blazing, as if with the enjoyment of her own wit which flashed, brilliant and ceaseless as the summer lightning, and, to the girl's great credit, quite as free from doing harm. To all seeming, Amy Pope was conscious of but one person in the room, that night; that one was Ronald Leslie.

Rob, in the meantime, was making little forays to and fro and up and down the room, determined to do his best to keep the talk from breaking up into duets. With that in mind, he paused a moment beside Jack, his hand on his friend's shoulder, but his eyes on Janet.

"Would you mind telling, Janet," he queried, when they reached a comma; "whether you are going to understudy the Secretary of War; or whether you mean to write an army novel? This thirst for gory information is a new departure for you; isn't it?"

Plainly she was displeased by the trivial interruption. Nevertheless, she forced herself to laugh up into his face.

"I always make a point of extracting useful information, whenever it's in reach," she assured him.

"You never tried it on me."

"I said *whenever*," she retorted.

"I am at your service. Meanwhile, I want to borrow Jack."

"What for?"

"To go play with Phyllis. I've talked myself threadbare. She likes Jack, too."

"Then it's time you tried to make her like you," Janet advised him coolly. "Ought you to go, Jack? You're the forlorn hope in earnest." And she dismissed him with a merry nod.

Rob slid into the chair his friend had just left vacant.

"Now me," he said. "Please sound my seas of information, Janet, and haul out a little fish of fact."

"Jack was giving me whales," she answered rather recklessly. "After that, I am afraid I sha'n't care for minnows."

"Thank you so much!" Rob's colour came; but his laugh was as jovial as ever. "Have you been seeing much of Phyllis lately, Janet?"

Swiftly she caught the point of his apparent discursiveness; and the colour flamed up hotly in her own cheeks. She rose to her feet with a little air of decision, and stood there for an instant, drawn up to her full height and looking down on Rob seemingly from an infinite distance.

"Not so much as you have," she made answer then; "but still, enough so that I recognize her manners, when I meet them." Then quietly she turned away, leaving Rob sitting there alone, and went to join Irene and Paul beside the open fire.

Amy detached herself from Ronald, at the last, long enough to give a mocking smile to Jack Blanchard.

"I haven't had a glimpse of you, all this livelong evening," she told him, as she smiled up into his eyes

with something quite alien to her old frank cordiality. "However," she gave a mischievous glance up at Ronald who stood beside her, tall, alert, and serious-looking; "you aren't the interesting invalid any longer, and now my mission in life is to entertain the homesick foreigner." And, tossing a final good night to him over her shoulder, she turned back to Ronald, leaving Jack to make his last adieus to Irene as best he might.

Nevertheless, next morning, she had lost somewhat of her last-night's gayety, and she looked tired and a little bit disheartened, when she met the Argyles just outside Grace Church. Day pounced upon her speedily.

"You're coming back to luncheon with us, Amy," she told her friend; "so you must wait for us, in case we don't all get seats together. And, after dinner," Day looked her in the eyes; "you are going to have the lecture of your life."

Amy's eyes wavered.

"What for, Day?" she asked. But, in her heart, she knew.

"For behaving abominably, last night." Day gave her arm a little squeeze. "Now go along and ponder on your many sins."

Later came luncheon; later still, the lecture. Day took her friend upstairs, leaving Janet to entertain the boys. However, when the lecture came, it swiftly degenerated into a cuddle and a talk. Day asked questions. Amy answered them. Day gave valuable advice and consolation which was still more valuable. Thus the long afternoon wore away, and at last Janet came

to knock upon the door, to ask if Day was never coming down to make the tea.

Then, and not till then, did Amy lift up her head from its comfortable place in Day's lap.

"I suppose I am all kinds of a silly being," she observed, as she pushed in her loosened hairpins and straightened up her collar. "When we self-reliant ones do lose our grip, the resulting chaos is awful. Still, there's not so very much harm done, Day. I've been a little cranky and tried to show my claws; but it's over, and you and I are probably the only ones who have thought so very much about it, after all. You can set it down to work and nerves; the others will think it was just my final fling, before I go to work in earnest, this next term. But, Day," she turned upon her friend abruptly; "truly, you don't think Jack has cared?"

"Yes, he has worried; but," Day hesitated, struggling between her manners and her honesty. In the end honesty triumphed; "but not nearly so much as Ronald Leslie has."

And, in the weeks to come, her words proved true.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

JUST one week after Easter, the friends scattered: Rob to Harvard, Paul to Williams and the five girls back to Smith, while Ronald went to join Lord Axmuthy in Chicago. It was Day Argyle who ordained that, in so far as the next term was concerned, the parting should be final.

"You all may come back to commencement," she had announced, the night before, as the group stood gathered for a final word or two in the Stayres' front hall; "but we distinctly do not wish to see any of you, until then. You'll keep, and college won't. Just now, college is the main consideration, and there won't be any room there, this next term, for outsiders."

"Not even?" Jack had wheedled her persuasively.

But Day had shaken her head.

"Not even you, Jack. We want to be all girls, in these last good times. Even the best of adopted brothers is a rank outsider, and must stop away."

And Jack, like all the others, had bowed to the justice of her words. They would keep, they others; and college, just now, was becoming very, very finite.

Accordingly, they had gone their separate ways, Jack to his office, Ronald westward, and Paul and Rob back to their respective colleges. Phyllis had returned

to the arms of Marguerite Veronica and the routine of freshman year, and the four other girls had gone onward into the alternating excitement and heartbreak of the senior summer term.

To the eye and mind of the entire outsider, heartbreak is conspicuous by its absence, all that senior summer term, until, perhaps, the morning of last chapel. Work, too, appears to be reduced to a minimum; but the air throbs with an excitement which increases steadily with each passing day. Commencement, looming in the near distance, is accountable for a part of this; but only for a part. Four years of almost ceaseless academic gayety have accustomed the girls to even the consummating gayety of all, their own commencement. The real thrill, the real heartbreak comes oftenest in simpler ways: out of the long walks and drives afield, revisiting for one last time the spots grown dear by four-year custom; out of the long, long twilight talks when the theme is ever of the unknown futures stretching forward in wavering lines which radiate out from the college portal, as from a common centre, talks when the pauses lengthen, and the phrases, coming slowly, are punctuated with little nervous sounds, half laugh, half sigh; out of the hours of straying to and fro about the campus, of sitting on the steps of the observatory to watch the darkness creep upward out of Paradise and blot away the pretty picture; even out of the scramble up the dim stairway of the college tower, to stand leaning, shoulder pressed hard to shoulder, watching the moonlit town and meadows and listening, the while, with inattentive ears, to

the unfailing fund of stories told by the veteran guardian of the place. No especial thrill in any of these things, the freshmen think as they look on. Three years later, however, freshmen no longer, they admit their error. It is the little things like these which prove the sweetness and the sadness of the college life.

Not even the most careless of the seniors can escape the occasional sadness; not even the most crabbed. In all the fun and gayety, every now and then there rears its head the snaky thought that this is the last time, that never again will the girls be doing this or that thing in just the selfsame way. Alumnae may come back in throngs; they may go through the same old routine of motions, but the spirit of it all is different. They merely play a game of *Let's pretend*. With the seniors, there is no pretence, no game. They are a part of the real thing; best of all they know it and they love it for what it really, truly is.

None the less, all-embracing as it is, the sadness is but intermittent. Mingled with it at every point and completely downing it at most is the excitement which, increasing slowly, steadily, wave on wave, mounts to its highest tide in that mid-June week which stretches from first dramatics till the final toast and song of the class supper. A sense of the finishing out of many things lies over all the college. The courses in philosophy and science are by no means the only ones to be completed. In those last days, intellects are to be rounded out no more surely than are characters and, above all, friendships. In more senses than one is that final term of

senior year the real preparation for commencement which is, after all, only the beginning of actual, practical, workaday existence for the average girl. It is then, under the strain of the great excitement and the little sadness, that the girls show out their real selves, developed by the four-year modelling of the great machine; then that are formed the lasting friendships, too rarely based on the affections of one's freshman year.

To this final rule, however, Sidney and Day and Amy, and even, in a measure, Janet, were proving the great exception. With Day and Sidney, the relation had never changed. Each needed the other for her perfect enjoyment. Mutually tonic, they were mutually satisfactory. Neither one of them would have deemed it possible to take an important step without first demanding and obtaining the advice of the other. In success or disappointment, each one went to the other, first of all, for comfort or congratulation. By degrees, moreover, the entire class had come to accept this relation as a general fact. As unlike as two girls well could be, to outsiders they stood always as a single unit, inseparable, indivisible. All that senior year, Sidney had ruled the class firmly and well, guiding it skilfully along the narrow, tortuous channel between sentimentality and arrogance; yet it was a matter of common theory that the real ruling was done, not in the class meetings themselves, but in the hours when Sidney and Day, alone in the Tyler House, talked things over and took counsel together. Day, meanwhile, was making a most acceptable addition to *Titania's* fairy train. There were a few

ardent theorists who maintained the ground that Day Argyle would have been far more a weighty mortal, had it not been for the frank criticisms bestowed upon her by their class president. Theorists quite apart, however, it was a fact they all admitted that neither Sidney Stayre nor Day Argyle would have been half the girl she was, without the other.

So far as the duet could become a trio, Amy Pope was the accepted third. From the beginning of their freshman year, Amy had been Sidney's loyal friend; it had been by way of Sidney that she had learned to know Day. Now, asked, she would have found it hard to decide between them. She relied on Sidney's sound judgment, on Day's swift intuitions. Sidney was strong, Day sympathetic. If Amy had ever felt a doubt upon this last score, it had vanished, that Easter afternoon, when she had lain with her head in Day's lap and talked with her about things which, she admitted later on, had been existent only in her own imagination. The wonder of it all lay in the fact that, afterwards, Amy had felt no regret, but rather a strange sense of consolation.

Like most self-reliant people, Amy at heart was sensitive. Few girls in Day's position could have heard her out and answered, and yet left no sting behind. Instead, Amy admitted afterwards, she had regained her hold upon herself by looking at things, herself included, with Day's clear, kindly eyes. After all, what had it been? The slightest possible change of attitude, construed by a tired girl into a wilful slight? An effort

at retaliation, first by coldness, then by the trivial trick of heaping all her favour at another's feet? It was a babyish thing to do, babyish and illbred. However, Amy's cheeks burned less hotly at the recollection, after her talk with Day.

Janet was the fourth one of the group — sometimes. Not always, though, by any means. More and more, Janet Leslie was finding out the truth: that she was born for friendship, not for intimacy. Like the tide, she could go so far, but no farther, save in case of storms. Storms, she was also finding out, were likely to prove disastrous to her moral fibre. Moreover, her own interests were absorbing a large share of her time. The new *Monthly* board was to be broken in; *Puck* was a young person whose eccentricities demanded no small amount of study; and there was one final course in American Diplomacy which seemed to Janet the fullest consummation of all the work which had gone before, a course which, day after day, threw clearer lights along the chosen path before her.

Nevertheless, as often as opportunity offered, Janet betook herself in search of Day and Sidney. Her own roommate was an earnest young soul whose whole intellect had measured itself by the possible possession of a Phi Beta Kappa key. Janet had chosen her because she, too, needed to be thrifty, even economical, and because she was an orderly, undemonstrative damsel of tidy ways and studious habits, a girl who could be safely counted on never to get in the way, or to talk mismatched hobbies at critical moments. Janet's

judgment had proved trustworthy. In so far as her roommate was concerned, her senior year was quite devoid of friction. None the less, Janet took in her pleasures from outside.

Her pleasures, her more social ones, that is, were of necessity somewhat intermittent. As result, Janet was learning to snatch at them promptly, when they came. Accordingly, one afternoon in late April, she cast aside her books, gave one glance at her engagement pad to assure herself that there really was not any rehearsal for that afternoon, and betook herself to the Tyler House.

"Just in time. Come on," Sidney bade her hospitably from the head of the stairs.

"Time for what?"

"Us," Sidney told her tersely. "Day will be here in a minute. She went back to take off her watch; she says it gives her an added sense of restfulness not to know what time it is."

"Yes; but where are you going?"

"To pick up Amy. Then to walk."

"Won't I be in the way?" Janet asked irresolutely.

"Nonsense! You never are. Weren't you pre-college?" Sidney assured her briskly.

"That doesn't count. Agatha Gilbert and Amy Pope were in the same school, before they came here," Janet observed. Nevertheless, she made no effort to withdraw from the approaching expedition.

The approaching expedition, however, was predestined to curtailment. Day joined them and, according to

their plan, they went across to pick up Amy. Amy's brow was lowering, when she presented herself.

"Oh, wurra!" she made lamentation. "Just as I thought I really did have one day off, the chairman of that scenery committee sent word she must have a heart-to-heart with me. Plague on her! Why can't she plant her shrubberies and elevate her grassy bunkers by herself, and leave me in peace? Else, what's the good of her being chairman?"

"To get her name on the programme," Janet suggested practically.

"Not fair, Janet," Amy retorted. "I don't want people saying that's what I was after. However, it does seem as if these sub-chairmen ought to be able to get on alone."

"They'd be sure to wobble and upset things, though," Sidney objected. "The one reason we put you in, Amy, was because we knew you'd keep a finger on each one of them."

Amy surveyed her slim, ringless hands despairingly.

"Even they aren't large enough for that, Sidney," she said. "Every now and then I need an extra thumb and forefinger to do a little extra pinching on some victim, and then the next in line is sure to get away."

"Is a pinching in order for this afternoon?" Day queried, from the step where she had cast herself down to await developments.

"I trust not. Still, you can't always tell what will come out of a conference. She's a good chairman,

though; and, in my more strenuous hours, I like to be consulted. It's only that I felt frivolous, this afternoon, as if something nice were about to happen, and I wanted to fare forth to meet it." Under her laugh, Amy's tone was a bit rueful.

"And you can't?"

"Needs must, when dramatics drives," Amy responded. "I can't go giddy-gadding to Florence, and leave the poor sub-chairman to confer alone."

"Tell her to bring along her colleagues and get inspiration from your daily abiding place," Day suggested languidly.

"Thanks; but I value my household gods, and some of them are throwable, as well as breakable," Amy made hasty response.

Janet's suggestion was more practical than that of Day.

"Then come over and frolic by the frog pond, and hear the toadlets *cheep*," she said. "You can tell the maids where you are to be found, and it is too fine a day to stay in-doors."

"The sub-chairman won't like it, and the toadlets stopped their *cheeping*, weeks ago," Amy protested. Nevertheless, she went inside the house to give the necessary instructions to the maid.

"I thought you had a *Monthly* meeting going on, this afternoon," she said to Janet, as, a little later, the four girls walked away together.

"Yesterday," Janet corrected. "We have prepared to lay down our arms and go out in a blaze of glory."

They'll never have such another year of the *Monthly*. We have made quite a new thing of it."

"Janet," Day rebuked her; "self-distrust was never your besetting sin."

"Never mind," Janet reassured her. "There's nothing evil in conceit, when it is corporate. You'll please note the fact that I said *we*. Of course, I consider it chiefly my own doing; but, as long as I don't boast about it, there's no harm done. By the way, Sidney?" At the risk of tripping up Day, she spun about to walk backward, facing Sidney.

"Well? But I advise you to look to your own ways, or you'll upset the daughter of the Argyle clan," Sidney warned her.

"No matter about the daughter of the Argyle clan. She can look out for herself. It's the Stayre daughter I'm interested in now."

"Garret, or cellar?" Sidney queried imperturbably. "Careful, you teetotum, or you really will have Day bowled over."

Janet disdained this second warning.

"Cellar, I should say. Leastwise, it's Phil, and she generally goes to the bottom of things more than you do."

"Best save that nugget for the *Monthly*, Janet," Amy advised her.

"The *Monthly* doesn't need it, thank you. It has better things in store for you than that. Really, Sidney, I do wish you'd listen. Did you know Phil has written another story?"

"No! Has she? Is it good?"

And Janet, who deplored slang in others and disdained it in herself, yielded to the stress of admiration which could find vent only in a word culled from Paul Addison's vocabulary.

"It's — corking!"

"Janet Leslie! I'll tell your mother," Day threatened.

"All right, you may," Janet dared her recklessly. "The story is so unusual, it calls for unusual strength of description. My mother will tell you so herself, once she reads it."

"Is it going in?" Sidney asked, in a species of parenthesis.

Janet answered her in the same parenthetical fashion.

"Going in! We can't afford to leave it out. If I may also quote from Lord Axmuthy, it's ripping. What did you remark, Amy?"

"That I'll tell your brother."

Janet stuck up her chin in merry parody on her own most wilful moods.

"I'm not afraid of him," she said pertly.

"Nor what he thinks?"

"Not one single bit."

"I wish I weren't," Amy observed, a little more gravely than she herself was quite aware.

Forgetful of Phyllis, Janet spun about to Amy.

"Amy Pope," she jeered; "do you truly mean that you're afraid of Ronald?"

"A little bit," Amy confessed.

"I'm confoundedly sorry to hear that, Miss Pope,"

a voice said in their very ears; and, an instant later, Ronald Leslie, cap in hand, came striding around a bend in the shrubbery-bordered path.

Janet fell upon him in delighted greeting.

“ Ronald Leslie, you old dear! Where did you come from? ”

“ Chicago. Axmuthy grew tired of the stockyards, and thirsted for the dewes of this academic grove. Glad to see me? ”

“ Enraptured,” Sidney said, laughing, as his hand came out to her, then Day. “ When did you arrive? ”

“ An hour ago. I saw your mother, Day, as I came through New York. Axmuthy decided that he ought to call, and — ”

“ How did you happen to find us here? ” Janet interrupted him.

“ The maid down at the house,” he answered vaguely. Then, last of all, he held out a hand to Amy, and, as he did so, his brown eyes sought hers in steady question. “ Why the fear, Miss Pope? ” he asked her.

But already Amy had rallied and was ready for the question.

“ Just because you are so very, very big,” she made demure reply. And then she added, a little bit at random, “ Come, Day. If you want to go up to the Field, it’s time we were starting.”

Ronald, smiling and quite quiet, interposed.

“ I am sorry to break up your going with the others,” he said to Amy. “ The maid, though, over at the house,

told me I might say, if I found you, that you were wanted over there."

"That chairman, I suppose," Amy assented, too much absorbed in the apparent message to heed the diplomacy of Ronald's phrase.

The diplomacy continued.

"Really, she didn't say. And I may walk back with you?" The brown eyes now were appealing. "Thank you. You others will excuse me, as long as you are three to one? And, Janet, you'll be at mother's house for dinner? She asked me to tell you to be sure to come." And, with another doffing of his cap, Ronald turned and walked away at Amy's side.

Left to themselves, the three girls speedily recast their plans and decided to go to Florence, after all. Quickening their step, then, they went up the lane and rounded the corner into Elm Street where the budding trees cast their lace-like shadows across the white dust of the roadway. Sidney and Day were talking fast, their tongues loosed by the excitement of Ronald's unlooked-for advent; but Janet, her eyes upon the long perspective of the budding elm-trees, tramped on beside them in a thoughtful silence.

At last, and quite out of the heart of her silence, Janet spoke.

"I really don't believe there was a chairman waiting, after all," she proclaimed to whom it might concern.

And the mocking laughter of her two friends assured her, without the needed help of words, that she had been a trifle late in arriving at such an obvious conclusion.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

“Ye spotted snakes, with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs be not seen;
Newts and blindworms, do no wrong;
Come not near our fairy queen!”

THE clear young voice seemed especially adapted to Mendelssohn's dainty phrases, albeit the singer herself, with her Psyche knot of yellow hair and her linen walking skirt, cut in the latest extravagance of fashion, was far too mundane for a well-conducted fairy. The surroundings, too, were but dimly suggestive of fairy-land. In front of the gymnasium stage, a quartette of poles did duty as the shrubbery bower wherein *Titania* was to be lulled to dreamland by her fairy choir. The fairies themselves presented every phase of girlish modernity, although gauzy scarfs, silken shawls and even an occasional automobile veil, knotted between the shoulder blades and carried by their upper corners in the outstretched hands, were politely supposed to look like fluttering wings. A collection of low benches, placed in apparently haphazard fashion about the floor, answered for the mossy mounds over which the fairies were to trip — in every sense of the word.

Half way down the floor of the gymnasium, Amy Pope

stood and exchanged low-voiced comments with a brace of elocution teachers; and, lurking in a remote corner and feeling rather shamefaced over her own presence, a privileged spectator was looking on. It was no small privilege, either, that had been vouchsafed, since veils and shawls and Psyche-knotted fairies, poles and benches, all were a part of one of the late rehearsals for dramatics.

"Try it once more," Amy ordered briefly. "Begin where *Titania* comes on."

The troop scattered, not flitting now, but racing off after a purely mortal fashion. There was a little pause, and then *Titania* entered, to strike the happiest attitude compatible with the yielding surface of an oaken pole.

"Now, fairies! Softly! Light! And please don't drop from the key, just because you are singing softly."

Again came the tinkling fairy music, this time from the chorus, —

"Never harm, nor spell nor charm
Come our lovely lady nigh."

And then a crash, as an end fairy, completely carried away with the beauty of the scene, missed her reckoning and bumped against one of the oaken substitutes for mossy mound. The fairy theme lost itself in a giggle; the brace of teachers frowned, and Amy laughed outright, while the disgraced fairy sought the wings, rubbing her knee caressingly.

Next to the disgraced and limping fairy stood Day Argyle. Tall as she was and healthy as a girl could be,

there was an indefinable lightness, a daintiness in her every motion, that fitted well her part. Dressed in pale green linen, she had caught up a scarf of green and silver tissue, as she had come out of her room; and the metallic sheen of the silken folds, catching the sun from a western window, threw their lustre back to light her fluffy pale brown hair. Active and lithe and eager, Day had danced almost from her babyhood, danced as lightly and untiringly as a bit of white down above a breezy meadow. Now she was throwing every ounce of advantage she had gained, whether by nature or by training, into the making of her fairy part. Amy, gazing from her to a fairy on the other side, a fairy with the wooden joints and sprangling arms of a Dutch doll, gave a little sigh.

“If only we had a dozen Days, we’d be all right,” she observed to the teacher next her.

The teacher smiled.

“We’ll get there in time. It’s too soon yet to know what the other girls will train to.” Then she threw back her head, and her voice rang clearer. “Now. Off the stage, everybody! Once more, enter *Titania!*”

And the scene repeated itself once more, and once more yet.

Afterwards came the fairy training: exercises for the lightness of the body; exercises for the fairy tread which should be neither run, nor skip, nor glide, but rather a blending of all three; exercises for the waving arms, and for the easy falling of the fingers. After that again came the training for the fairy laughter, laughter

up the scale and down, laughter in every sort of key, until the oaken rafters overhead seemed ringing with an elfin mirth, until *Titania*, sitting on the edge of the stage, her dangling heels tapping out the measure, smote her palms together in lusty applause.

After it was all over, Amy and Day walked away side by side, their pale gowns of pink and green crumpled together with the closeness of their contact. Day heaved a little sigh, as they went down the steps.

"You were satisfied, Amy?"

"Yes. It went fairly well. I wish none of the others were any more — more heelish than you are. Some of them do come down with a most mortal whack, every now and then. Still, I suppose they will improve. We've a good deal of time ahead."

"And a good deal of work. Is anything left of you, Amy?"

"Yes, any amount. Really and truly, Day, I am thriving on it and getting fat." She turned a singularly happy face towards her friend. "Don't I look it?" she inquired.

Day laughed.

"The astounding fact of it all is that you do," she said. "It is enough, though, to kill a dozen stalwart lackeys. Besides, at Easter —"

Amy interrupted her.

"Forget it, Day," she said a little bit appealingly. "I promise not to get on my nerves again. Besides," she added, with a charming blush; "I am having too good a time, nowadays, to want to."

It was not altogether a change of theme that dictated Day's next question.

"Really, Amy, manners apart, how is Janet working up?"

Amy forgot her blush, forgot, too, her little mood of self-defence.

"Wonderful!" she exclaimed. "Manners or no manners, she is a star. Wait until you see her." For, as yet, the play was rehearsing only by sections, not as a whole.

"I've seen her do scraps of it, of course," Day answered. "It seemed to me she was wonderful. I am so glad, too. Ronald and Mother Leslie will be so proud of her, and Janet is working harder, even, than I have ever known her. She deserves to succeed at any rate."

Amy laughed.

"It isn't deserts; it's genius," she asserted. "I used to have all sorts of holy ideas about perseverance and determination; but they all have been knocked out of me, these last few weeks. A girl can act, or she can't. Deserving hasn't the least thing to do with it."

Day shook her head.

"Once you've rested from trying to build a *Quince* out of Agatha Gilbert, you'll change back again to your old theory. But really, Amy, I am delighted over Janet. The child is working to the very limit of her time and strength. Moreover, she isn't working for herself, as most of us are. Her soul is set on making Ronald proud of her."

"Perhaps," Amy's blush came back again, but Day

was too intent on Janet to vouchsafe a glance at the friend beside her, so the blush died away, unseen; "perhaps she isn't so unique in that as you may think," she answered Day, in a voice which not all her effort could make to sound quite natural in her own ears. Then her accent changed. "Anyway, Janet is bound to make an ideal *Puck*," she added.

Lord Axmuthy, however, disagreed with her.

"*Puck* has got to hop and skip about," he said, when Janet confided to him the great news that she had been chosen for the part. "You can't do that, you know."

"Why not?" she demanded.

Lord Axmuthy, with sagging jaw, contemplated her during one thoughtful, speechless moment. Then, —

"You're a girl," he said, as weightily as if he had just chanced upon some brand-new discovery.

"Yes."

"Girls can't hop about and fling summersaults."

Janet laughed.

"How do you know?" she demanded again and saucily.

"Know?" Again came the pause of thoughtful scrutiny. "Why, the way a chap always knows things, you know."

"But we can," Janet argued.

"Can what? Not know things, you know; because girls can't. They only think them. Really, you do jump to conclusions at a shocking rate," Lord Axmuthy said helplessly.

This time, Janet felt she had him cornered.

"But you just said we couldn't jump," she reminded him.

Lord Axmuthy, in his turn, jumped the corner.

"Well, you can't," he asserted, with conclusive brevity.

"How do you know?"

The sporting blood of his British forbears throbbed suddenly in the veins of Lord Axmuthy.

"Try it now," he challenged her. "Else, I'll not believe it."

And Janet gave in, totally suppressed. Inasmuch as she and Lord Axmuthy, in their Sunday best, were walking churchward, bound for morning service, she felt it would be inadvisable for her to accept the challenge.

Lord Axmuthy, during those soft May days, was having, in vulgarest parlance, the time of his whole life. The seniors, from their freshman year, had carried him in hilarious recollection. Now they accepted him as a sort of honorary member of the class, endowing him with all manner of odds and ends of privilege denied forever to the decorous and dignified Ronald Leslie. Meanwhile, by way of his occasional calls on Mrs. Leslie, Lord Axmuthy had established himself on terms of friendship with the Leslie house freshmen, who one and all united in treating him much as they might have treated a hoary chimpanzee culled from the nearest zoo. Alternately they coddled him and teased him to the very verge of frenzy; and then they stood aside and watched the resultant antics.

The one exception to this rule was Phyllis Stayre. Her earlier meetings with his lordship had been roughened with friction, in so far as friction could be developed on so soft a surface as Lord Axmuthy's mind. Later on, they had developed the habit of mutual avoidance. How the third and final phase had worked itself out of its predecessors was a secret known only to the two people most concerned; in fact, it was perceived, rather than understood, even by them. Howsoever that might be, by the middle of the summer term, Phyllis Stayre had taken Lord Axmuthy bodily over into the circle of her protection, and fought his battles with an energy past all gainsaying.

Once only, after a battle of unusual vigour, she vouchsafed a word of explanation to an audience made up of her sister and Marguerite Veronica.

"I know how it is, myself," she said; "and it hurts. The queer one always gets the worst of it, unless he has somebody to take his part."

And take his part she did, early and late, in season and out, reasonably and unreasonably, but always valiantly. In this she manifested, not only her kindly heart, but her affection for a fight as well. Phyllis, justly pugnacious, was in her element; but Lord Axmuthy, stone blind to the inherent fightiness of his champion's disposition, gave her his gratitude in fullest measure.

"I say," he confided to Sidney, one day; "I think I rather like your sister. I usen't to, you know; but she understands how to go about it with the other girls

and make them stop their chaff. Chaff does get very tiresome, you know, when one keeps it up too long." And, his glass in his eye, he gazed across at Sidney rather appealingly.

Three weeks later, he issued another bulletin.

"I say, you know," he burst out excitedly, when he met Sidney coming up from down town, her arms full of bundles; "I've been out walking with your sister. She's game, you know. You should have seen her thrash a boy that was teasing a cat. Really, she quite walloped him about the ears. I say," he added meditatively; "I think I'd not mind about being her cousin, too. She's not like you, of course. In fact, she's very masterful, at times; but I'm not sure I mind. Now and then, one likes to see a girl that's not a china shepherdess, you know."

And a shepherdess Phyllis certainly was not, unless her desire to protect her charge from the ravening and hilarious wolves which beset his pathway might have allied her with that race. She took superlatively good care of Lord Axmuthy; but she took it quite in her own way and with the scantest possible notion of his lordship's theories and traditions concerning social intercourse. Now and then, he gasped a little at some wholly unconventional manœuvre which Phyllis executed with a serene unconsciousness of all effect. Now and then, he dodged instinctively at the falling of some mighty blow so widespread in its scope that it seemed impossible that he should escape obliteration. However, as the days went on, the ill-assorted comrades became in-

creasingly good friends. The peculiarities of Phyllis were set down by Lord Axmuthy as mere bits of her national characteristics. His eccentricities she attributed solely to the fact that he never had been completely understood. Not that Phyllis made any especial effort to understand Lord Axmuthy. She merely took him as he came, and sought to make the best of him. With that in mind, she even endeavoured to act the part of chorus to his speechless moments. By way of result of her endeavours, though, Lord Axmuthy as a rule became yet more speechless, as he saw his vague thought phrasing itself, not according to the sketch of it he had made in the erratic convolutions of his own brain, but in the interpretation given it by Phyllis whose mental processes were free from all convolution, and about as light as a sledge hammer. Now and then, he even sought to explain himself a little clearly; but Phyllis promptly took the explanations from his tongue and refashioned them to suit herself. In the end and by slow degrees, Lord Axmuthy gave up the attempt to become vociferous, and left Phyllis to do it for him. After all, it was restful to be managed.

"It's just as well, you know, for you to do it all," he made philosophical observation, towards the latter end of May. "Then, if they get testy at me, they'll take it out on you, and I'll not have any of the trouble of the row."

And, upon that final judgment, Lord Axmuthy proceeded to repose.

Meanwhile, their growing friendship was by no means

wholly of the spirit. Together, they roamed as far afield as Lord Axmuthy's natural indolence would allow. Together, they sat about in sequestered nooks, while Lord Axmuthy gazed raptly at the floating clouds, and Phyllis lectured to him about the Glory of WOMANHOOD, or read to him bits of Tolstoi and Thomas à Kempis, for she was approaching sophomorehood and had a consequently increasing tendency to take everything in earnest. Day and Sidney were very busy in those long May days; Ronald was spending endless hours in loitering about the neighbourhood of the campus, on the off-chance of a word with Amy Pope. Axmuthy, accordingly, had been cast upon his own slender resources, when Phyllis, taking pity on him, had annexed him to her list of things to be taken quite in earnest.

Granted the need, Phyllis was singularly fitted for the task. Leisure she had in great abundance; the quickness of her mind ensured so much, that and the energy with which she went about her classroom work. Moreover, the girl was lonely, in need of a companion. Marguerite Veronica was not wholly ideal, taken in this capacity. She had a trick of interrupting, when Phyllis started to expound. Lord Axmuthy never interrupted. He merely relaxed the muscles of his lower jaw and gazed out into unfathomable space. Moreover, too, the girl, polished a little by the months of friction with her many mates, spurred on by the little edge of college fame which had come to her from her two stories in the *Monthly*, was beginning at last to find herself. Finding

herself, moreover, she felt the imperative need of arguing out the new relation borne to the universe in general by her freshly-discovered self. The old theories would not fit the new Phyllis. She must argue out some equally new theories; and argument without an audience, each one knows, soon gets to be a bore. Furthermore, hunting through and through the whole round world, she could have discovered no other audience comparable to Lord Axmuthy.

"And yet, after all, why jaw?" he had queried wearily, one day.

In an instant, Phyllis set upon him and smote him sharply.

"That's vulgar," she rebuked him tartly. "Besides, it's not polite."

Lord Axmuthy sat up, his back dotted with bits of lichen from the supporting tree trunk, and gazed at her with eyes dazed by her rebuke.

"But it's so true, you know," he sought to defend himself. "What's the use of making so much talk about nothing in particular?"

Phyllis flushed hotly. She had been talking largely of herself, the previous half hour, and Lord Axmuthy's words struck home.

"I like to talk," she said a little stiffly.

"Of course. Any chap can see that. It's as plain as the nose on your face," Lord Axmuthy assured her.

The assurance was not wholly reassuring. Phyllis, suddenly self-conscious, chafed her large nose for an

instant, before proceeding to retaliatory measures. Then, —

“I’d rather have a large nose than a pug,” she made vicious answer.

Lord Axmuthy sought his glass and stuck it in his eye.

“Oh, you!” he observed trenchantly. Then he added, with a manifest desire to administer tardy consolation, “Well, you’ve got it.”

In spite of herself, Phyllis laughed. The laugh cleared her own mental atmosphere, and she recurred amicably enough to her original proposition.

“Really, Lord Axmuthy, I like to talk,” she iterated.

“Yes.” This time, it was plain, he sought to answer guardedly. “Then why don’t you get about it?”

“I was afraid I might be boring you,” Phyllis told him, with unwonted meekness.

“Oh, no; I don’t get bored. I just think about something else,” he assured her gravely. “It doesn’t take more than a word to set me off, you know, and then deuce knows where I will bring up.”

“No? Not really?” Phyllis spoke with well-feigned interest.

“Oh, no. It’s quite remarkable the way one’s brain works. Sometimes, it quite kicks over the traces and jumps about like — like a mountain goat.” Lord Axmuthy paused to take pleasure in his well-chosen illustration. “That was what it was doing, just a while ago. The merest word had set me going, and when I stopped, you know, I was wondering why it was, if

you were so set on talking, you never talked by any chance about the things that could interest a chap."

There came a little dropping cadence into Phyllis's voice.

"What sort of things do interest a chap?" she questioned.

For a moment, his glass in his eye and his lips pursed out thoughtfully, Lord Axmuthy contemplated the distant face of nature. Then he spoke alertly.

"Big game," he said; "and fancy waistcoats, and your dentist, and how underdone you like your beef."

Phyllis rose to her feet.

"Come," she said abruptly. "It's time that I was going home."

Without stirring otherwise, Lord Axmuthy turned up to her an anxious countenance.

"I say," he observed.

"Well?"

"You're looking jolly cross."

"I'm not cross." The tone, however, belied the words.

"Oh." Lord Axmuthy fell silent, fell, too, into reverie.

Remorselessly Phyllis jogged him from his reverie.

"Are you coming?" she demanded.

"Where?"

"Home, of course. Do you suppose I am inviting you to wander off into the wilderness?" Her tone was still impatient.

No impatience, however, was in his lordship's answer.

"It wouldn't be a bad idea," he said reflectively.

"It might for me. Are you going to sit there, all night?" Phyllis demanded, for the second time.

"Oh, no."

"Then come."

Instead of coming, Lord Axmuthy settled his hat firmly upon his head, and then clasped his hands upon his bunched-up knees.

"I say," he asked her then; "are you often so very cross?"

"I'm not cross," Phyllis asserted testily.

"You aren't? But really, you know, you look it," Lord Axmuthy argued gently. "I wouldn't get a habit of it, you know. You wouldn't, either, if you only knew how very ugly it makes you look. Besides," he added casually; "it's not like you at all. As a general thing, I find you quite good-tempered."

Strange to say, Phyllis felt her testiness yielding to the rebuke she so richly merited, yielding the more swiftly by reason of the final bit of praise which, she was so well aware, she did not merit in the least.

"Thank you," she said quite humbly. "I'm sure I wish I were."

Lord Axmuthy dropped the subject, dropped, too, all apparent consciousness that she stood waiting there beside him. For a long, long interval, he sat in silent study of the water at his feet. When at length he looked up to meet her eyes, his face was creased with two deep wrinkles which seemed bracketing his widely-smiling lips.



“ He lifted one lean forefinger and shook it at her jauntily.”

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"I say, you know," he burst out alertly; "isn't this what they call Paradise?"

"Yes."

"Then," his voice grew still more alert and, unfolding his hands, he lifted one lean forefinger and shook it at her jauntily; "then let's you and I be Adam and Eve, you know."

"Lord Axmuthy!" The words came from the lips of Phyllis as if they had been blown out by a heavy charge of dynamite.

Unruffled and widely smiling, Lord Axmuthy sat still and looked at her. At last, however, he offered explanation.

"I don't mean now, you know. We'd best wait till you are older and a little better tempered. You see, you know enough to do the two of us, and you don't chaff a chap all the time, as some girls do. Really, I think," the finger once more came into play; "I think the idea will bear remembering. Besides, you know," he added even more alertly; "if you thought it over and decided for it, then I could keep on always being cousins with your sister."

Then, rising stiffly, he offered a carefully crooked elbow to his bride elect, preparatory to starting out for home.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

MIDWAY down Main Street, Sidney halted. "Well, of all the unexpected visions!" she said slowly.

In response to her words, two hats were swept from two heads, one yellow, the other brown.

"How do you do, Miss Stayre?" the owner of the yellow head said suavely, while he shifted his suitcase to his left hand, and held out the right to Sidney.

"Rob Argyle, what are you doing here?" Sidney demanded.

"Jack and I thought we would come up and spend Memorial Day with Phil," Rob explained gravely. "On account of its being Sunday, we get an extra holiday, so we wrote to know if it would be convenient for her to have us."

"Phil?"

"Yes. Sure. Why not? Phil is a good girl; and, from all accounts, she seems to be needing a good American on the horizon to serve as basis of comparison. That is, if Day's letters are to be trusted."

Sidney shook her head.

"You're too late, I'm afraid. Besides, Jack isn't an American."

"No; but he will be, if he keeps on," Rob replied

calmly. "He's improving, every day of his life. Speaking of improvement, how is Day?"

"Busy, and as heavenly-minded as ever. However, you can judge for yourself."

Rob swung his suitcase back into his right hand.

"Oh, but I'm here to visit Phyllis," he responded.

"Phyllis? Really, is the child expecting you? She hasn't told me."

Rob chuckled.

"She hasn't had time. She won't get our letter, asking if we can come, until to-morrow noon. I looked out for that. Knowing Phil, I thought it wasn't best to take any chances of being regretted."

"But why didn't you write to Day or me?" Sidney asked blankly.

"Because mine own sweet sister, when we parted at Easter, put up a sign: *No Room for Loungers*, a sign in great big letters half a yard long and as loud as a megaphone. After that, we didn't feel especially encouraged to make her any visits."

Sidney turned.

"Nonsense! You're coming back to the Tyler with me now."

"Not on your life! We value our ears; don't we, Jack? Besides, we've made an engagement to go straight to Mrs. Leslie's."

"An engagement!" Sidney scoffed. "When it hasn't reached here yet, and won't for hours!"

But Rob shook his yellow head.

"We keep our engagements to the letter," he replied.

"Sometimes, as you see, we keep them a little ahead of the letter. Run along, Sidney, and take your walk. We are due up Elm Street."

"Then I shall go with you," Sidney insisted.

"Better not," Rob advised her, with a cheery accent of impartiality. "It may be better for your family pride, you know, if you don't see the way Phil greets us."

However, to the extreme surprise of every one concerned, Phyllis entered into the spirit of the joke completely. Perhaps it was because the girl was broadening, and finding herself, the while she broadened. Perhaps she felt that the jovial comradeship of Jack and Rob would be a bit of a relief, after the mild excitement of Lord Axmuthy's continued presence at her side. Perhaps, too, some wave of girlish vanity made her quite willing to exhibit herself to her unexpected guests as the chosen friend and the spiritual guardian and the social champion of his ineffective lordship.

Whatever may have been the cause, Phyllis received her guests most graciously, smiled with a sort of grim politeness upon Rob's explanation of their reasons for choosing her as hostess, and promptly set to work devising plans for their entertainment. In this latter task, Marguerite Veronica would have been a willing assistant. Phyllis, however, rejected all her offers of advice or help, rejected them kindly, but very, very firmly. Rob Argyle and Jack Blanchard, she was well aware, had not made their journeys to Northampton for the sake of being amused by kittenish freshmen such as

Marguerite Veronica. Her own plans for entertainment lay along quite different lines.

As Rob had said to Sidney, Memorial Day, that year, came on a Sunday, giving the Monday holiday. The two boys had appeared to Phyllis, late on Saturday afternoon. Quite graciously she had assented to their suggestion of a call, that evening. She had not felt it needful, though, to warn them that Lord Axmuthy was also imminent. The resulting combination came near to proving too much for even Phyllis Stayre to handle. Jack was courteous suavity itself; but Lord Axmuthy divided his time between looking down upon the broad-shouldered Canadian as from an infinite height, while he regaled him on scraps of conversation edited to suit his social antecedents and his present station, and gazing at Phyllis with a meek, adoring blankness, whenever she sought to call him to order or to put him through his paces. Rob, meanwhile, was in a state of hilarity which verged closely upon spluttering hysterics. The sight of his British lordship, supine beneath the iron chariot wheels of Phyllis Stayre, delighted him no less than did Phyllis's air of calm proprietorship in the mind and body of the futile little man.

Under conditions such as that, conversation balked, then reached an utter standstill; and not all of Phyllis's efforts could drive it past the balking point. In vain she ransacked all the nooks and corners of her mind in search of pungent themes for conversation. Finally, she gave it up, and turned to Lord Axmuthy.

"You have been here so very long now, Lord Axmuthy," she began, with ponderous gravity.

"Eh?" His lordship made a hasty snatch towards his hat which, fearful of the honesty of a freshman house, he had insisted upon hanging on his left knee.

Very slightly Phyllis shook a warning head at him. Almost imperceptible as was the gesture, Rob caught it. Moreover, Phyllis had an exasperated consciousness that he had caught it.

"You have been near the college so long, Lord Axmuthy," she amended her phrase; "that I wish you would tell us what you really think about the higher education of women."

Dutifully, promptly, Lord Axmuthy passed in his verdict.

"Ripping!" he asserted. "It gives 'em such a tremendous lot of force of character, you know."

The next instant, Rob, struggling manfully with his emotions, heaved a sigh of frank relief. The great front door swung open and, a moment afterward Janet Leslie dashed into the room.

"So here you are, you sinners!" she said, as she gave a hand to each one of the guests. "Sidney telephoned to me that you were here. She and Day declare they won't come near you; but they told me I might take you over to the Tyler, for a little while, and sit there with you at the other end of the veranda. Phyllis, I am sorry I can't carry you off, too; but you appear to be engaged."

Then it was that, to the utter consternation of everybody present, Lord Axmuthy lifted up his voice.

"Oh, no; we aren't," he contradicted flatly. "She's quite too young, yet, and she's got to get a little better tempered before she'll pass in England. We are only thinking about it now, you know; but I dare say we'll pull it off in time."

Next morning, in furtherance of his own small joke, Rob insisted upon escorting Phyllis to church, where he found all the places for her with an ostentatious devotion which drove the girl wellnigh to frenzy, and rendered her, for all time to come, an object of respectful envy to all the other freshmen within range. Contrary to her outward seeming, their girlish logic argued, Phyllis Stayre must be a veritable charmer, so to engross the entire attention, not only of a titled Briton, but, far more desirable, of the stalwart Harvard senior whose very face was enough to demand their instant liking. In the days that were to come, the attitude of Phyllis's classmates towards her would be distinctly modified by the outward facts of her visit from Rob Argyle.

Jack, meanwhile, had vanished, ostensibly with a message to Janet. In the course of the morning, however, he was heard from by way of Ronald who had come upon him, calling upon Amy Pope; but, just at noon, the truant reappeared with Day beside him, crisp and starchy in her spotless white.

Next day, to all appearing, Phyllis was at the helm of things in general. Sidney, however, had spent a

long hour in her sister's room, the night before; and Sidney, had she been questioned with sufficient shrewdness, might have betrayed some knowledge of the course those things were to take. Rob, meanwhile, contrary to all his protestations, had been lured over to the Tyler House veranda, where he sat at ease upon the railing, with Day before him in her easy chair. The veranda was quite deserted, that evening, save for the distant corner, where Jack and Janet sat and talked Canadian gossip; and the brother and sister, for the hour, were to all intents and purposes alone.

For some time, they talked at random, bringing each other down to date regarding the small, but essential, details that get omitted from even the longest letters, dodging backward at some reminder of their Easter holidays, dashing forward for an eager word or two about their summer trip to Europe, a family trip in which Jack also was to have a part. And then, all of a sudden at the mention of his name, Day grew a little thoughtful.

"Rob, is he getting fickle?" she inquired abruptly.

"He? Who?"

Not daring to speak his name, Day merely nodded towards the distant corner of the wide veranda, now draped in heavy shadows, as the evening darkened out of twilight.

Rob shook his head.

"Nonsense! Not a bit."

"But — but it looks a little so."

"Then don't trust to the looks, Day," he advised her gravely.

Her brown eyes, raised to his, were very thoughtful, grave.

"I don't want to, Rob. And yet, I can't help worrying a little."

Most boys would have assured her that her worry was quite wasted, even though the outward circumstances of the case had justly called it forth. Not so Rob, however. He was too loyal to his love for his friend for that. Instead, —

"What makes you worry, Day?" he asked her.

She dropped her voice a little lower.

"The way things have gone, all this year. Just now, it's Janet Leslie. All last summer and up to Christmas, though, it was Amy Pope. Then, all at once, he changed, changed without any apparent reason. Rob, it's not like him to be doing that, not like the one we want him to be."

Loyalty to his chosen friend opened Rob's lips to speak in his defence. A greater loyalty, born of that friend's confidence, closed them again and bade him to be silent.

"You think Amy cares?" he asked, after a minute or two of silence.

"She did, bitterly. I think she doesn't now."

"How do you know?" Rob queried bluntly.

Day hesitated. Then, because she could see no harm in frankness, especially to Rob, she spoke out.

"Part of it I guessed. Part of it I made her tell me."

We talked it out at Easter. She liked him, counted on him as a good friend — not anything more than that, truly.” Bending forward, she laid her hand on Rob’s, to emphasize her words. “She couldn’t understand the change, any more than I could, and naturally it hurt her. She was very tired, too, with all this extra care and work about the play, and that made the hurt a good deal worse. Besides, I think she worried, for fear she had done something to make such a sudden change.”

Leaning forward, his elbows on his knees, Rob watched his sister closely in the dimming light, listened intently to her low words.

“And now?” he asked, after a little pause.

Day answered without hesitation.

“Amy is very splendid, Rob,” she told him. “She shook herself and took a good, fresh grip of things, and accepted the matter as it came. She kept herself so busy that she hadn’t any time to worry, and I really believe that now she doesn’t even think about it very much. The best of it all is, she doesn’t seem to feel hard to Janet in the very least.”

“Why should she?” Rob inquired, with masculine obtuseness.

Once more Day nodded towards the other end of the veranda.

“That’s why,” she said conclusively. “And, after all, Amy is human.”

For a little while Rob studied his sister in a thoughtful silence, as if seeking to discover whether she, too, were human in the sense that she had used the word of Amy.

Apparently the results of his scrutiny satisfied him, for at length he spoke, slowly, and far more gravely than it was his wont to do.

"Day," he told his sister; "I know a good deal more about this thing than you do, and I want you to promise me one thing: that you'll trust old Jack's honour and loyalty as long as you both shall live." And not even the impressive final words, fraught as they were with solemn association, added one jot to the earnestness of Rob Argyle's charge to his young sister.

Sidney, meanwhile, in Phyllis's room, was busy shaping the course of things in general for the coming day.

The course, as it transpired, was to include a trip to Leeds, the climbing of an infinitesimal mountain, and the cooking of things for luncheon and, a little later on, for tea, upon the rocky outcrop of the summit. The participants in this festivity were to be the Leslies, the Argyles and the Stayres, with Amy, Jack and his lordship. It was Phyllis Stayre alone who gave the invitations, a gracious Phyllis clad in pale pink gingham and a flapping hat encircled with a pale pink scarf.

The rocks at Leeds are steep and slippery, the hilly pastures wellnigh pathless. By the time the little party was half way up the climb, even Ronald Leslie's long legs were weary, and Amy Pope, beside him, frankly confessed to being out of breath. Sidney, however, alert and indomitable, had been in the front rank from the very start, walking with a free, tireless step that told its own story of her perfect poise. Half way up the

slope, however, her step wavered, hesitated, lagged. A little later on, she was sauntering contentedly along at Rob Argyle's side, well in the rear of the procession.

"This is hard on you, Rob," she had said directly, as she had turned to wait for him to overtake her.

"Not so bad. I miss my stick, though, on a climb like this," he had made cheery answer.

"Where is it?"

"In the front hall at home."

"Why don't you use it?"

He made a wry face.

"Don't like the looks, Sidney. I'm not an aged dodderer, nor yet an Englishman. After all," he cast an amused glance up the hill at Lord Axmuthy, toiling along at Phyllis's side; "the two terms are synonymous, more or less."

She laughed.

"More, rather than less, I should say." Then her tone changed. "Really, Rob, is this too much for you? I was a goose to plan it."

He shook his head in answer to her question. Then he spoke in answer to her later words.

"So you planned it! I had a notion it was Phil's doing, a species of endurance test, designed to sift Axmuthy. I understand that they've put each other on mutual probation."

"Sit down a minute, Rob," Sidney told him abruptly.

He gave her a glance of keen scrutiny.

"What now, Sidney?" he queried, but a look in his blue eyes belied his mocking voice. "Whether is

it a fresh regard for my feeble knees, or has the mention of the Phil-Axmuthy affair bowled you over? ”

“ Both, a little,” she said. Then the smile left her eyes and lips. “ Janet told me,” she added. “ Rob, just how bad is it going to be? ”

Deliberately Rob placed his long person on the moss beside her, deliberately stretched out his lame knee which was aching from the climb. Then he turned to Sidney and spoke without a trace of flippancy.

“ Really, Sidney, I wouldn’t worry, if I were in your place,” he said. “ Of course, Phil is ridiculously young, and, besides, we haven’t been prone to think of her as being matrimonially inclined. Of course, too, his other engagement is a little bit more recent than is usual. Still, they aren’t a usual pair of people, do what you will.”

Sidney, her eyes on his face, shook her head.

“ Nor ever will be,” she said, after a momentary silence.

“ No,” Rob assented gravely. “ Perhaps it’s all the better for it.”

“ You think it’s bound to be, then? ” Sidney asked gloomily.

Rob pondered for a while, his blue eyes on the valley at his feet.

“ Sidney,” he said at last; “ I think I rather hope it will — in time. Saturday night, when the fellow came out with his announcement, I was completely flabbergasted. No other, no more decent word can express

it. Since then, I have grown rather to like the idea. It solves a good many problems. Phil isn't like every other girl; she's bound to have an extra outlet for her energy; and, from all signs, she'll get it by way of Axmuthy. He's a futile sort of soul; she manages him a good deal as if he were a rag doll. What's more, she's happy in the managing, and so is he."

"Yes," but a cloud lay in Sidney's gray eyes. "Still, after she gets a little tired of the managing, what then? Is he the man to make her happy?"

Rob took his eyes away from the valley at his feet and fixed them upon Sidney's face.

"Sidney," he said, still with the same unwonted gravity; "Axmuthy is totally futile, and as funny as a monkey in a satin petticoat on top of a hand organ. Still, the little chap is a gentleman; he's honest and sincere as a man can be, and as generous. Phyllis has brains for two. If he were as clever as she is, they would fight like cats and dogs. Axmuthy will never set the world on fire; but he doesn't need to. His great-uncle did that, once for all; and all Axmuthy has to do is to shuffle around in his shoes without losing them off entirely. It will be a great advantage for him to have Phil looking out for him, and making sure he keeps inside the shoes."

Sidney heaved a little sigh.

"Yes," she assented once more. "But when he gets tired of being looked out for?"

Rob shook his yellow head.

"He won't, not if she goes at it the right way."

Then he added slowly, as if with some special meaning, "Sidney, we never do."

"Perhaps. I'm not too sure about it, though," Sidney answered. Then she fell silent, so much engrossed in Phyllis and her erratic lover as almost to forget the yellow-headed, hearty giant at her side.

The giant was by no means forgetful of Sidney, however. Instead, lying back at his ease to rest one elbow on the ground, he fixed his blue eyes on her face, studying it intently. He took slow note of the deep gray eyes, steady, kind, true, of the firm lips and chin, of all the modelling of the fresh young face, strong, trusty, and, above all, very womanly. Whether or not she was absolutely pretty interested him not at all. Watching, he merely told himself she was very good to look upon, better still to have for one's most trusted chum. Besides, —

"Sidney," he said so suddenly that the girl started at the breaking of her reverie; "it's six years now that I've known you."

Slowly she turned to face him, letting her clear gray eyes rest upon his blue ones.

"Six good years," she assented, with a smile. "What of it, Rob?"

Her accent pleased him, no less than did her utter absence of all self-consciousness, as she put the simple question. For just a moment, his chin showed a bit unsteady, and the scarlet dyed his cheeks. Then, with his old, cheery smile, he spoke.

"Merely a proof of what I told you, Sidney: that we

don't get tired of being looked out for. In all the time I've known you, I honestly think you never have forgotten for one minute that I — I had played football a little bit too hard. We neither one of us have said very much about it; but I've always known I could count on you, whenever I was in a tight place. It has made a difference, too."

Sidney's face grew very gentle, while she listened. Frank as had been all her intercourse with Rob Argyle, she was aware that he spoke but very rarely out of such a mood as this. Moreover, the years had made a difference to her, too, to her and also in her.

"I am so glad, Rob," she told him quietly. "It never seemed, though, as if I were doing very much."

An odd, whimsical little smile came at the corners of his lips.

"Not so much, from your standpoint, Sidney. It was merely that it was too much for any of the others."

"Except Day," she reminded him.

"Of course," he assented. "Always, except Day."

Then the silence drifted in between them, slight, slow, imperceptible at first; then, before they were quite aware of its existence, unbreakable. Sidney watched the shadows of the clouds moving across the distant hills. Rob watched Sidney. Once he started to speak, sitting up and even opening his lips. Then he checked himself, and settled back again while once more the scarlet blood stained his honest, happy face. At last, Sidney recalled her wandering thoughts and rose to her feet.

"Come," she said. "The others were out of sight, long, long ago. If we don't hurry, we'll find they've eaten all the luncheon."

But Rob, without stirring, smiled up into her alert young face.

"I say," he observed tranquilly; "if Janet hadn't given me that letter of introduction, what do you suppose we'd have been doing now? "

Sidney's answering laugh should have been death to any sentiment.

"Totally disregarding each other, probably."

Nevertheless, there was a certain gravity in the way Rob shook his head.

"I doubt it, Sidney," he made deliberate answer. "Things may get themselves postponed; but they generally happen in the end." And once again Rob Argyle's voice took on the note of special meaning.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

IN all New England, few places are cosier than Barnstable. Especially is this true when the spring rains are beating on the old brown rafters overhead, when the wind sweeps the mist wreaths to and fro above the fertile meadows just beneath the windows, or hangs them on the rocky ledges of the mountains beyond; when the tea and buttered buns, smoking hot, are set out on the dishes stamped with the arms of the old inn of which, aforetime, Barnstable was what its name implies. Now the inn has vanished, however; and one has only to cross a bit of green lawn, pull open a door and clamber up a narrow stairway to find the old barn loft swept and garnished and ready for the serving of endless cups of smoking tea. The old rafters are left intact; intact is the primitive finish of the aged interior. The only points of daintiness, aside from the extreme neatness of the place, are the heraldic dishes and the quality of the buns.

Thither, one afternoon when the rain splashed down in torrents and the wind was busy in the elm trees and out upon the open meadows, thither, one afternoon in early June, Day came with Ronald Leslie. The expedition was of her suggesting. The storm had made her restless; and, moreover, she was anxious to make

the most of that rare privilege nowadays, an afternoon free from a rehearsal. Ronald had chosen the place, however. During the past four or five months, he had tested the merits of all the tea shops in the region, and to Barnstable he had given his entire allegiance. The buns and scones were the real thing, albeit somewhat demoralized in flavour by the nearness of the vast, cream-laden wedges of strawberry shortcake, which were beginning to appear at many of the tables. Nevertheless, he liked the place; and, by now, he had learned the especial charm of one small table in the extreme corner of the room, a table looking out across the meadows, and set for only two.

Now, with an air of manifest relief, he pushed Day's chair a bit nearer the table, and laid his hat and stick upon a convenient bit of beam. Then, with the odd little backward shake of his wavy hair, a gesture that Day well remembered as being characteristic of all his social preparations, he drew up his own chair, sat down and beckoned to a maid.

"What do you want to eat, Day?" he asked her then.

"Ever so much," she answered hungrily; "and let it be as British as possible, Ronald. Let's play we're back in Quebec again, and having tea at the Little Shop."

Contentedly he smiled across at her, before he gave the order.

"Those were good times, Day," he told her thoughtfully.

"And these are better, Ronald," she replied quickly.

"We are older now; we know what our friends are worth, and we don't squabble as we did then."

Elbows on table, chin on fists, he eyed her gravely.

"I only remember one great row," he answered.

"As I think it over from this distance, it seems to me you were quite too busy bringing me up as I should go, to have much time left over for squabbling."

Day's eyes swept over him in deliberate scrutiny.

"Did I bring you up? Really, I'm not sure I made a very good piece of work of it," she said. "I never realized I was the architect of such a structure." Her tone was as saucy as were her mocking brown eyes.

To her extreme surprise, her companion coloured hotly.

"I have done the best I could," he made defensive answer. "I haven't had the chances, you know, that Rob has, or Paul Addison."

Leaning forward, her hands clasped lightly on the old brown table, Day looked straight across into his eyes.

"You've had other chances, Ronald," she reminded him; "chances to grow. Moreover, you have grown. Giving up things for the sake of Janet and your mother, and going over to England to live out your responsibilities, you're ten times the man that any university could have made you. However," in her turn, Day flushed scarlet, as she delivered her rebuke; "however, growing as you've done, you ought to be too large by now to be so sensitive about things that one didn't mean."

He met her glance gravely, but without a shadow of resentment.

"It's the old fault, Day. I begin to think that I shall never down it."

"You will," she told him fearlessly; "that is, if you keep on working at it." Then she looked up again, just as the maid bore down upon them with the tray. "Ronald," she added hastily; "after all these years, you are wonderfully good to let me sit here and lecture you, the way I used to do. It isn't the lecturing exactly; it's for all that it stands for, and — We girls do care for friends like that." Then, for the tea and toasted buns had come, she gave over speech in favour of the duties of the tray.

While the buns lasted, Day and Ronald chatted alternately about their common friends, and about the storm which was growing more fierce with every passing moment. Then, when they could eat no more, and when Day had drained dry the little teapot, they sent away the tray and settled themselves for a gossip.

"You simply must not go out at present," Ronald asserted masterfully. "In such a downpour, you would float away like the merest chip on the tide. Best wait here, on the chance of its slacking up a little. If it holds on too long, we'll have a cab."

Promptly Day scoffed at the suggestion.

"Cab, Ronald! I'm a college girl, not a fine lady in society and thin-soled shoes. However, it's nice, inside here. We may as well stay and have our gossip by this window, instead of at the Tyler House. You see, I

have a whole free afternoon, and I insist upon being entertained until the very end."

And Ronald, nothing loath, settled himself more comfortably in his chair, his elbow resting on the oaken beam beside him, his slim hand lying, palm upward, on the table.

"I'm lucky to get the afternoon, Day," he made contented answer. "Except for Amy Pope, I'm not seeing so very much of any of you girls; you're all so busy."

Day smiled at the rain-swept meadows underneath the window. With the unerring masculine instinct, Ronald had happened upon quite the wrong excuse. Amy Pope was, by all odds, the busiest of all their little group.

"We are busy, Ronald, nowadays, very busy," she told him, after a short pause. "That doesn't make us care any less for our old friends, though, or enjoy them any less, when we do have time to play with them."

Ronald wandered off into a by-path of the theme.

"I don't remember so much about Miss Pope," he said.

"Amy?"

"Yes. From the time I was here before, I mean."

"Perhaps you didn't see so much of her, then," Day made wholly obvious suggestion.

"No; I fancy not. Of course, she was one of the freshmen in the house. I remember her, and even her sister," Ronald said thoughtfully. "They always

used to be about the house; but I never used to see them as I did you and Sidney."

Day laughed at his reflective tone; then she sought to lighten it.

"Perhaps because we two girls gobbled up all your time," she said.

Ronald shook his head. Like every other British subject, he was leisurely in the workings of his brain, save when his feelings were the point at issue.

"No; not that. I think it was largely my doing. You see, you were the only American girls I had ever known. You were used to me. The others all made me feel a good deal of a foreigner."

"Canada isn't foreign," Day protested.

He laughed at his own forthcoming quibble.

"No; but America is," he said. "That's where the whole difference lies."

Day smiled in answer; but she made no effort to discuss racial questions, and a silence fell between them. Ronald broke it, and discursively.

"Do you know," he remarked, after an interval of tapping his knuckles against the rain-streaked window; "I always used to think Miss Pope was a bit of a snob."

"Amy! Nonsense!" Day repelled the charge with energy.

"I know. Of course, I understand her better now," he made meek answer. "At that time, all I knew was what Janet had told me: that she had any quantity of money, and that her ancestors were all kinds of famous people."

Day turned exceedingly literal.

"Her father is a lawyer who gets very large fees, and her great-grandfather was Secretary of State, in the days when that sort of thing really counted. However — What is a snob?" She flung the question at him sharply.

Again his colour came.

"It's — it's —" He blundered, as he sought his definition. "Why, it is a person that feels above one, I suppose."

Day shook her head until the trimmings of her hat danced with the motion.

"Not a bit of it, Ronald! A snob is somebody who isn't anybody and tries to be all sorts of people," she corrected. "No; don't laugh. It sounds rather mixed-up; but really it isn't in the very least. A snob stands on her toes and tries to look taller than she really is. Can't you see the difference? My snob is a snob ingrained. Yours is just any bad-mannered person who happens to come along. Besides," she added in swift conclusion; "Amy isn't either."

"So I find," Ronald told her briefly. "It takes a while to find it, though."

"Ronald," Day questioned abruptly; "did Janet ever tell you about our fight, last year, when Jack went back on his old run, just for the sake of helping out a man down with typhoid, a man he had known in the old days?"

Ronald looked up politely, but with an obvious lack of interest.

"No. She never told me."

"Nor anybody else?"

"No."

"Listen, then." Her elbows on the table and her hands clasped before her, Day plunged into the tale. She told it all from start to finish; moreover, she told it well, down to the well-remembered hour when Jack stood at bay before his so-called friends, awaiting the finish of the chorus of condemnation. Telling the ugly little story, Day's face was yet very sweet and gentle, as she sat there, her brown eyes now on Ronald's face, now on the rain-lashed meadows, but all the time plainly blind to what lay near at hand and in the present, and only beholding Jack Blanchard's face as it had been, keen, strong, and showing hurt in every line and feature. Then all at once she turned her eyes back again to Ronald, and it was plain that now he was once more at their focus. "And then," she told him, low and quite gently, but with a curious, slow distinctness; "when Janet and his own mother had condemned him, and none of the rest of them knew just what to say next, it was Amy Pope, the girl you called a snob, who came out first of all and strongly on his side."

Then purposely she let the silence fall again.

When Ronald spoke at last, he appeared to have departed from Amy as his central theme.

"Blanchard is a good fellow," he observed temperately.

To his extreme surprise, he saw an ominous flash in Day's brown eyes.

"I should say he was," she answered rather curtly.

"Yes, I quite agree with you," Ronald assented, with a mildness that completed Day's exasperation. "He's rather an all-round man; and he's getting to seem quite like a gentleman."

Day snapped suddenly.

"Why shouldn't he?" she demanded, with some heat. "He is; and there's no especial reason he should conceal the fact." Then she controlled herself, laughing a little nervously. "Oh, Ronald Leslie, when will you learn the way we Americans look at things?" she asked him.

"Never, I begin to think," he told her, in mock despair. "Besides, the question is: how much is American, and how much is you Argyles? I don't meet so many girls like you, Day."

"Sidney?" she reminded him.

"Ye-es. But, after all, it's not quite the same for her," he responded.

Day disdained to contradict his distinction.

"And Amy Pope?" she added.

Even behind Ronald's self-conscious blush, his face cleared.

"Yes, perhaps. But does she really feel the same about things, after all?"

"I told you about Jack," Day said fearlessly. "Surely, that was a test case."

Ronald once more fell to drumming on the window.

"I'm not too sure," he said a little moodily. "It might have been merely a personal issue. Miss Pope thinks very much of Blanchard."

"Yes." Day's assent was rather more dubious than she would have cared to make it, had she realized its possible importance to Ronald. "Yes, she and Jack have always been good friends."

Ronald nodded slowly.

"Of course. And he thinks a great deal of her; he is bound to. But the next question is," and again his eyes grew moody; "would she feel that way about everybody, or only just about him?"

Day's gravity departed, and her laugh burst out, gay and irresponsible, across the gloom of Ronald's mood.

"Ronald," she adjured him; "you've been with Lord Axmuthy so much lately that you have absorbed his mental methods. If you've something on your mind, do have it out and over, and not let it strangle you like this."

But Ronald refused to share her merriment. Abandoning his tattoo upon the window at his side, he once more cupped his hands beneath his chin.

"Very well," he answered, with what, for him, was quite unwonted brusqueness; "if you must have it straight, here 'tis. Would Amy Pope, with all her ancestors and all her millions —"

"Hundred thousands, at the very most," Day made literal correction.

Ronald waved aside the correction.

"With all this back of her, would Amy Pope look down on — well, me, for instance?"

Strange to say, Day, with all her keenness, was mis-

led by the apparent carelessness of the final words. Nevertheless, —

“Why should she, Ronald?” she asked him.

“I haven’t a cent to my name. I work hard to help on my mother, who likewise works hard, taking student boarders.” He spoke deliberately; but a slight unsteadiness of lip and nostril and of the long, slim fingers betrayed that his quiet was merely superficial.

“What difference does that make?” Day demanded.

“All the difference in the world — sometimes.”

“Never. Not to anybody that’s at all decent. You’re a gentleman; aren’t you?”

“I hope so,” Ronald confessed meekly.

“And you pay your bills, and don’t shirk earning your salary, and help somebody else along a little bit, besides?”

“Only mother and Janet,” he confessed again. “And they have to work for their living, too.”

Once more, Day brought her elbows down upon the table, this time with an angry thump.

“Ronald, you do make me very cross,” she said. “You are so fine in some ways that you have no business to have such bargain-counter notions. You say you care for Amy Pope’s opinions. If Amy Pope were to hear you babble along like this, she would cut your acquaintance, at once and for all time. It’s you that are the snob, not she.”

To her astonishment, Ronald neither flinched nor even blushed beneath the fervour of her arraignment. Instead, he answered her with a curiously gentle gravity

which warned her, for the first time, how near to his heart was this whole question.

"But honestly, Day, there really is something to be said on my side."

Purposely she misunderstood him.

"Of course there is. You were born a gentleman. You are honest and independent; and —" as if repenting of her recent heat, she unclasped her hands and held out one of them to him; "and you are a loyal, patient old chum to let me lecture you, the way I do."

Smiling, he laid his fingers on hers for a moment. Then, as he resumed his former position, the smile died away once more.

"I didn't mean that, Day. I only meant that there was something to be said in favour of my babble."

"Yes, there is," she answered coolly, as she sat looking at him above the bridge of his interlocking fingers. "It gives me some idea which of your mistaken notions need correcting first."

"But are they so mistaken?" he persisted. "Even you Americans —"

Again there came the little flash in the brown eyes before him. Again the owner of the eyes controlled herself and curbed her irritation.

"Even we Americans, Ronald, have a little saving common sense," she told him flatly, yet with an accent that bore no sting of temper. "We like our money, and the nice things it gets for us and for our friends. It isn't the only thing we like, though, and we don't choose our friends because they have it. In fact, if

they do have it, and don't use it for any good, we generally end by cutting them completely. And it's not just us girls who feel that way, either. Rob is just the same, and so is my father. It's the man himself we care for; what he is, himself, not what he's got."

"And you think," Ronald asked her slowly, while his brown eyes seemed to look her through and through; "you really think that Amy Pope feels the same way about things?"

"I should despise her, if she didn't," Day assured him curtly.

"And that she would — would —" Ronald hesitated, turned scarlet, stuck fast.

"Would what?" Day pushed him a bit remorselessly.

Ronald floundered for a helpless moment; then he braced himself to the inevitable, and blurted out, —

"Would ever get to care for a chap who didn't have one tenth as much as he ought to?"

For one short instant, Day's brown eyes seemed to be popping from her head. Then she rallied swiftly.

"Ronald, you splendid old thing! Is that really what you have been driving at, all this long time?" she asked him breathlessly.

His secret out, Ronald sat back in his chair, blushing and smiling, but apparently quite satisfied at his own self-betrayal.

"I suppose it is, Day."

"Suppose! Don't you know? Oh, you gigantic old dunce!" Day assailed him. "Why don't you go about it, then, and find out for sure?"

Ronald turned a shade more crimson.

"I would, if I knew just how to go about it."

"Ask her," Day advised him flatly.

"And if I dared," he added.

She looked up at him in sudden gravity.

"Ronald, you are afraid?" she asked him.

"Yes, Day." And his gravity grew even deeper now than hers. "Yes, I am."

"Why?"

"Because — because I haven't so much to offer her, you know." His slim hands, open on the table between them, added point to his words.

"Not now. You will have," she insisted.

Slowly one hand shut into a tight fist.

"Yes, God willing," he told her solemnly.

It was a little while before he spoke again.

"Day," he said then; "you know the both of us. You have known me for five or six years; you know I've nothing but my father's record and my own grim determination to win out in time. You know Amy, too, know her as nobody but another girl can do. What do you think of the chances?"

It was no question for Day to answer lightly. The tall Canadian was very much in earnest now. Moreover, Day knew quite well that, beneath the mask of his handsome, sensitive young face, his gentle deliberation of manner, Ronald Leslie was strong, resourceful and determined. To be sure, as the world measures things, he was no good match for Amy Pope. However, was there no other, higher standard than the one by

which the world does measure things? As if in answer to her own question, a sudden wave of scarlet blood mounted across her cheeks and dyed the roots of her pale brown hair. Neither for herself nor Amy, she believed, would the world's standard ever be quite final.

"Ronald," she told him, with a sweet gravity, born not entirely of her old affection for this good comrade of hers, but rather in part out of the secret sources of her recent blushing; "no one girl can ever safely say what another girl, in such a case as this, will do. All I can say is that I hope you are not going to be disappointed. I do know you both. You are one of my old, old friends; I trust you and I honour you completely." Her brown eyes met his eyes in perfect frankness. "I believe that you will make some girl, Amy, or some one else, a splendidly happy woman. As for Amy Pope, she's true as steel, and honest and straightforward as any girl can be, can ever be. The man who gets her is going to win a treasure; and," she rose, as she spoke, and stood beside him, tall and smiling; "and I truly, truly hope you'll be that man."

And then, still smiling and quite heedless of any looker-on, she offered him her hand in token of her own sincerity.

CHAPTER TWENTY

“**I** SAY, Day,” Rob Argyle had observed, upon the threshold of their freshman year; “has it ever occurred to you that one or the other of us must get himself dropped, for the sake of our seeing each other through our own commencements?”

However, the kind forethought of trustees and overseers had made such stringent measures needless. By reason of the date of his senior vacation, that final breathing time before the actual finish, Rob found it quite in order to see Day’s graduation through from end to end. Laden with all of his best raiment and smiling from ear to ear, he reached Northampton early in the day of Friday dramatics, and promptly swept his sister off her feet and into his strong embrace.

“No end proud of you, old girl!” he assured her, as he set her down again. “But why this hectic pal-lor?”

Day laughed.

“The same sort of *why* that kept me from meeting you at the station. I am a fairy, you must realize, and this is the remains of my last-night’s make-up.”

“Great Scott!” Rob gazed at her in open consternation. “You don’t mean it’s going to be chronic?”

“Not as chronic as one could wish,” she reassured

him. "I shed a good deal of it off, all over the pillow case, last night."

"You'd best have shed it all, while you were about it," Rob protested. "I say, Day, I hate to see you painted up in this fashion."

Day gave a little prance of sheer excitement.

"Wait till you see me on the stage," she advised him.

"Hold still, you jumping-jack! I've brought you something to keep you in good temper." Rob struggled with his pockets, and then drew out a little case. "Will I have to wait long?" he queried, as Day fell upon the case.

"Rob! What a darling!" she exclaimed.

Rob laughed.

"Ambiguous, ma'am. To which of us do you refer, the person or the thing?"

"Both." The contents of the case glistening in her hand, she cast herself upon his neck. "You always do think of the nicest things!"

Rob's arm went around her tight, tight, for just a minute. Then, laughing, he held her off in mock self-protection.

"'Ware my clothes!" he ordered her. "I don't want to walk abroad in a pink-cheeked collar and a coral-lipped necktie."

However, she gave him one final nuzzle for good measure. Then she returned to the ways of sobriety, and the contemplation of her sapphires.

"My birthstone," she said contentedly. "You were such a dear to choose them."

"They're said to be lucky," Rob assented. "Besides, they ought to be becoming, once you get yourself made down a little."

"If you think I am made up, you ought to see Janet," she responded.

"Heaven forbid! That is, if she's any worse than you are," Rob made hasty answer. "When do I see you caper and flap your gauzy pinions, Day?"

"To-morrow night."

"Not till then? I thought you did it every night or so."

"But that is the great night of all," she told him. "I thought you'd rather see it then."

"There's nothing against my sitting it out, two nights running," he observed.

"Nothing but lack of tickets. However," Day pondered swiftly; "it's possible I could get an extra for to-night. It won't be any fun; nothing but old alums, and no calling out the girls. Still, if you think —"

"Sure!" Rob interrupted. "Likewise Jack. Has he come yet?"

"He'll be here, just before luncheon. These came, this morning." Day lifted the heavy-headed rose in her belt.

"These?" Rob bent to look. "Ah, I observe. This is a sample copy."

"Yes. He sent about a bushel, all of this greeny-white. Sidney had some, too, from him; but hers were all dark red."

"Characteristic," Rob made comment, with an odd little smile about his lips. "Jack's not altogether the person you'd say would talk in flowers; but, once he goes about it, he manages to be fairly expressive."

"What are you talking about, Rob?" Day inquired, in manifest curiosity.

Rob's answer was scarcely framed to lessen her curiosity.

"Little brindled pussy-cats," he answered. "Now run along, Day; I must be going over to the Inn, to prove property on my room; else, they'll be giving it to some other girl's adoring relatives."

"Room!" Day echoed. "Does the boy think he can have a room all to himself! It's Jack's room, too."

"Then I'll proceed to annex my share before he comes, as Phil did in the case of Marguerite Veronica. Tell me, Day, how did that combination ever come out?"

"It's still coming." Day laughed a little. "They are to room together in the Albright, next year."

"Room together! Je — rusalem!" Rob whistled. "Marguerite Veronica must be a nervy soul."

"She is. Phil makes no bones of saying she'd rather keep on with her than have to get used to some other roommate's didoes. Don't look so shocked; I'm only quoting. Besides," Day added, as if from a tardy sense of justice; "I really think that Phil is improving just a little."

"Under the chastening influences of Axmuthy?" Rob looked about for his hat. Then he turned back

again to inquire, "Have you ever heard what Papa and Mamma Stayre think of Phil's bantling?"

"Not in detail. Sidney hasn't inclined to say too much about it. It's my own notion, though, that they think they can't well help themselves, and may as well behave as if they were resigned to whatever comes. Now do go on, Rob." And she gave him a little push towards the door.

"Why this unseemly haste to get rid of me?" Rob demanded, without stirring.

"Merely to get you back again as soon as possible. We must have just one talk together, before Jack gets here."

"Even Jack, Day?" For an instant, a graver note came into Rob's jolly voice.

With a little gesture of complete self-abandonment, she flung herself into his arms, where he caught her and held her close.

"What is it, Day?" he asked her gently, for it was but seldom that she showed herself emotional like this.

Without stirring otherwise, she turned her face up to his. Her cheek was once more pressed against his shoulder; but, this time, Rob manifested no anxiety for the possible fate of his clothes. Instead, looking down into her brown eyes, he drew her closer to him.

"Rob," she was asking a little bit unsteadily; "do you suppose a dozen Jacks could ever come in between you and me?"

And Rob's answer came with all his heart.

"No, Day. No one ever could."

Then, for they heard a step approaching in the hall outside, he bent his head to kiss her cheek, her forehead, then gently let her go from his embrace.

Nevertheless, no trace of their emotion lingered in their faces, two hours later, when, side by side, they paced up and down the long platform of the station. Day, daintily dressed and groomed, but veiled with suspicious care, had insisted on meeting Jack at the train; and Rob, nothing loath, had set out at her side. Just at the entrance to the station, Day had halted, laughing.

"Rob," she demanded gayly; "do you remember the day we came down these steps, after we'd watched the *Aurora* out of sight? What a dismal pair of youngsters we were!"

Rob's laugh jarred the arching roof above him.

"By Jove, Day, I had forgotten. We went to walk; didn't we, somewhere off over there, and had our woes out by ourselves? I remember thinking that Cambridge was a good seventeen hundred miles from here."

Day nodded.

"I shared the belief. I also remember the heroic fashion in which you offered to give up Harvard and come to Amherst. Even in my mizzles, I couldn't accept any such sacrifice as that, though."

"Imagine it!" Rob laughed again. "I could have put on my Sunday coat and my real-leather gloves, and come across to vespers, any week. How nice! Still, Day, we've managed to survive the separation."

Day laughed.

"We have. Also, Rob, strange as it may appear, Daddy has managed to pay for your mileage books; but I wonder that it hasn't crippled him financially."

"He has saved it in worry and in telegrams," Rob answered. "He knew I was on the spot to look out for you, and he could rest easy on that score. They'll be up, to-morrow?"

"In the afternoon, any number of them, a whole *Aurora*-ful. Speaking of the *Aurora*, Rob, has it ever occurred to you that my diploma isn't going to say a word of Day Argyle?"

Rob's eyes swept over her contentedly.

"No matter; all the rest of the college is," he told her. "By Jove, there comes the train, Day! Hurry, or we'll miss him, after all." And they went speeding down the platform at a pace which proved that Rob's strained leg, however it might make him limp, had by no means parted with all of its agility.

That afternoon, they were all on the veranda of the Leslie house for tea: Janet, Sidney and Jack, the Argyles, Phyllis and her faithful Lord Axmuthy. Last of all and very late came Ronald and Amy Pope. Their excuses, when they did come, were not altogether coherent or satisfactory. Amy, blushing a little as she spoke, put in the plea of an unexpected duty which concerned dramatics; but, inasmuch as the delinquent pair had come out of the lane which leads to Paradise, the path of duty must have lain along a devious trail.

Ronald, on his side, made no especial plea. He merely listened to that of Amy with approving eyes, but cheeks the colour of a ripe tomato.

"Your duties must be nearly over, Amy," Jack said, as the delinquents settled themselves on the edge of the veranda and accepted their cups of tea.

"To-morrow night is the end."

"And it has been worth the while, in spite of all the work?" he questioned.

Amy nodded.

"It remains to be seen, though," she added, in modification of her nod.

From the other end of the veranda, Lord Axmuthy lifted up his voice.

"I saw it," he said a trifle thickly, owing to a recently-acquired scallop of cheese sandwich.

"You? I thought outsiders didn't get the chance until to-night," Rob interposed.

"I went with her," Lord Axmuthy explained, with a cursory sort of nod at the girl beside him. "It was her night, you know; and I thought, all things considered, I'd best be with her."

"In case she swooned, or else had a row with the ushers?" Rob inquired. "It might be safer, as you say, all things considered."

Lord Axmuthy gazed down upon him from his own superior pinnacle of information.

"Oh, you couldn't row the ushers; they are girls," he said.

"You couldn't; but perhaps Phil could make it

out," Rob was beginning; but Day, for the sake of prudence, intervened.

"What did you think of the play, Lord Axmuthy?" she asked.

Lord Axmuthy, his cup uplifted in his hand, pondered for a space.

"Not too bad, you know," he answered temperately then.

Janet, in the lee of Jack's elbow, stuck up a reproving head.

"Is that the best you can say of us, Lord Axmuthy?" she demanded.

Again his reply was temperate.

"Really, you know, it might be worse," he explained.

"Lavish praise, Janet!" her brother called across to her. "Evidently I'll not blister my palms, applauding you."

"Oh, her?" Again Lord Axmuthy pondered. "But she hops around the stage so fast, you can't really tell what she's supposed to be about."

"*Pucking*," Janet told him gravely.

"Eh? Oh, is that it?" Lord Axmuthy sought the solace of his eyeglass. "I am not sure, then, I'd care to go in for it, myself; it makes one seem to feel so very flustered. Really, it isn't restful in the least."

Once more in common prudence, Day sought to intervene. One and all, they themselves were in imminent danger of becoming flustered at the suggested picture of Lord Axmuthy as *Puck*.

"Have any of you heard of any really good criticisms?" she inquired. "Any others, I mean," she added, with belated courtesy.

"Only the gossip of the girls. I hear they like it, as a general thing," Sidney responded.

"They'd better," Amy asserted, in mock indignation. "After the way I have worn myself out in the cause of dramatics, I demand recognition of our grand success."

"Hush, Lord Axmuthy!" Phyllis checked a semi-audible comment from her companion, checked it with a masterful severity which taxed to the uttermost the gravity of all the others in the group. Then she turned to Amy. "I heard one comment," she said. "I don't know, though, what it was worth. I had a girl next me, a wonderfully handsome girl, with bright brown eyes and hair. What?" She turned back to Lord Axmuthy with a curious blending of annoyance and strained patience.

"She looked so terribly in earnest, you know," Lord Axmuthy was murmuring at his empty cup. "Really, I felt quite afraid of her, when I met her eye."

"Which eye?" Phyllis demanded, as she craned her neck to peer into his cup. "Mrs. Leslie," she added then; "I think Lord Axmuthy might have another cup of tea."

Rob's own tea shook on his knee.

"Bad for the nerves, Phil," he reminded her.

"Not if he doesn't take too many lumps of sugar and upset his appetite," she answered gravely, and Sid-

ney made haste to lay a steadying hand upon Rob's cup and saucer.

"What did the girl say, Phyllis?" Amy asked her.

Phyllis delayed her answer for a second.

"Only two lumps, please," she bade Mrs. Leslie.

"And, while you are about it, you might lay another sandwich in the saucer." Then she turned to Amy.

"I heard her telling somebody behind me that she was back for her reunion. She said she was in the cast of their own play, and that, all in all, this was as good as *Hamlet*."

"Amy Mehitabel Pope!" Day spun about to seize her friend by the hand. "You'd best sing your *Nunc dimittis* right straight off, before anything comes up to nick the edges of your fame."

Amy's eyes showed her pleasure; but she only laughed. Then, —

"Wait until to-morrow night," she bade them.

"Nothing will be settled until then."

"What happens, to-morrow night?" Jack asked her.

But Sidney forestalled Amy's answer with her own.

"Chaos," she said crisply.

Amy yawned.

"Excuse me," she said, in contrite haste. "I really didn't sleep so very much, last night. When I did, I dreamed of Janet."

"What about me?" Janet once more stuck up her head.

"Merely that you and the President were turning handsprings. It was a race between you to Kingsley's

and back. If you won, you were to treat all the cast to ice cream soda."

"Hm! And if he did?"

"He was to treat the faculty. They were lined up on the opposite side of the walk and — What's the word, Rob? *Rooting?*"

Lord Axmuthy, his spoon in one hand, his sandwich in the other, eyed her, agape.

"Really, Miss Pope, how very extraordinary your college customs are! When did you say this race is coming off?"

"Speaking of chaos," Amy remarked, after Day had delivered prolix explanation to Lord Axmuthy; "do any of you girls realize the delights of this present peaceful scene? I only wish all commencement could be like it."

"Amy!" Janet made horrified expostulation.

"But I do," she persisted. "All the functions, of course; but just us to enjoy them. Do you take in the fact that I have nineteen relatives, some of them very collateral ones, descending on me in the course of the day, to-morrow?"

"If you didn't want them, why in the world did you ask them, then?"

"Manners," Amy replied tersely.

"For my part, I should prefer to be sincere." Quite obviously it was Phyllis who spoke, and her accent had more than a trace of her old nippy brevity.

Lord Axmuthy caught the accent with manifest alarm.

"Oh, yes. Yes, of course," he assented hurriedly. Then he drained his cup to the very dregs, eyeing Phyllis uneasily, the while, from above the crowned initials on its exposed lower surface.

"I was sincere enough," Amy answered indolently. "How could I know they'd all be so misguided as to come? Some of them are people I've never even seen, friends of my mother and that sort of thing."

"And they are coming?" Day's tone betrayed her incredulity.

"Yes. One skittish damsel of sixty-three is coming all the way from Denver, 'on purpose to see Lillian's baby girl get her sheepskin.'" Amy's voice supplied all necessary quote marks. "In fact, they all seem to count on seeing my fingers clutch that sheepskin. If only they would call it a diploma!" Amy added, with a patient sigh.

"It's only a misguided sense of humour, Amy. But what will you do with such a caravan?"

"Allow the best two to look on at the ceremony, while the other seventeen sit it out on the grass outside," Amy made callous answer.

Phyllis, dropping her spoon, gently nudged Lord Axmuthy to call his attention to the fact. Unhappily for all of them, Lord Axmuthy mistook the signal. Instead of rescuing the missing spoon, he turned to Amy with what he obviously intended for obedient promptness.

"I say, don't you suppose that I could help to entertain some of them for you?" he queried amicably.

Amy eyed him for a speechless moment. Then, —

"I shouldn't wonder if you could," she replied, with absolute, unsmiling gravity.

And then, in mercy to them all, Sidney started to her feet, by way of breaking up the little party.

The good byes said to Mrs. Leslie, Phyllis abandoned his lordship to his meditations, and placed herself at Jack Blanchard's side.

"Jack, I want to talk," she told him, with a hint of her old brusque directness.

With a word to the others, he turned to Phyllis and stood before her, looking down at her and smiling.

"Yes, Phil, what now?" he said, and his voice had the kindly ring that matched his eyes so well.

"Let's take a little walk," she said. "That is, if you can spare the time. I'm only a freshman, I know, and don't count for much. But then —"

Again he smiled at her, not mirthfully, but with a kindly inquiry, as if encouraging her to have her way.

"It looks shady up that side street," he suggested, after he had waited in vain for her to speak again. "What if we walk up that way?"

Phyllis nodded, and together they set out, she bare-headed in the dappled sun and shade, he with a small gray cap cocked on one corner of his head. Side by side, they looked curiously alike in age, for Jack's cap turned him to the likeness of a boy, and the face of Phyllis was lined with thought of all the things she wished to say. At first, she shrank from saying them; but finally they came out with a jerk.

"Jack," she began abruptly, after they had paced on

in silence for some distance; "all this afternoon, I've been watching your scar, and wondering —"

The colour flew into his cheeks, and, with a half involuntary gesture, he drew his cap forward; but his smile never faded.

"Wondering, Phil?" he asked her.

"Whether I'd made good," she answered briefly.

For a minute, he failed to grasp the course her thought had taken.

"Made good?" His accent was a little blank.

"Yes," she said impatiently. "Just that, made good. Don't you remember, Jack, how I told you then, the time we were burned, that I'd do my level best to have the day come when you'd say it had been worth your while?"

Intently now the steady brown eyes rested on her face, reading all the unuttered questionings that lay behind her words.

"Yes, Phil. I do. But I said it then, child."

"I know you did; but that was just the — the Jackishness of your point of view. Can't you say it a little bit more sincerely now?" The girl's voice roughened with her own repressed emotion.

For a long minute, the brown eyes seemed to Phyllis to be looking her through and through, taking the mental measure, not of what she was, but rather of what she sought to be. Then Jack held out his hand.

"Phil," he said; "you've always had it in you. Now you are growing up to yourself, and it's bound to come out. If you keep on, the time will come when I shall

call the scar, in all seriousness, what Day calls it now in fun: my badge of honour, won in your loyal service."

Phyllis bit her lip.

"I do try, Jack. It isn't always easy."

"No, Phil. I don't find it so, myself," he told her gravely.

"But, once you begin to get the things you want, it isn't nearly so hard," she said reflectively.

"And you are getting them? I'm glad, Phil."

"Yes." Her head upon one side, she looked up at him with something of the manner of a wise old parrot. "I am getting a good many things, nowadays. Some of them I want now, like my *Monthly* stories; some of them—I may get to want them by and by; but Jack—"

"Jack," Amy hailed him, with a leisurely unconcern which gave no hint of the breathless course she had taken around the curve of Crescent Street; "I do hate to break in on Phil's good time; but I'm going to be busy, every single instant of to-morrow, and I do want to get a little good of you, myself."

It was the old, frank, cordial Amy who had halted in his pathway and was smiling at him with lips and eyes so nearly on a level with his own, lips a little tremulous, eyes sweet and true and girlish in their unveiled gaze.

Phyllis nodded, with a gruff gentleness.

"All right, Amy. I've had my turn, and finished what I had to say. Where are the others?"

"Down on the campus, all but Lord Axmuthy. He

was sitting on the Leslie house veranda, when I came away."

"Poor thing! I'd better go and find him." And Phyllis departed on her errand.

Amy looked after her with merry eyes.

"It's funny, Jack; isn't it? Desperately funny? And yet, it's the same old story in another kind of cover."

A half hour later, they came straying slowly homeward. Jack looked curiously content, and Amy was beaming with her happiness. At the foot of the steps, they halted, and Amy held out her hand.

"I wanted to tell it first to you, Jack," she said, still with the hearty, friendly frankness that of old had marked her manner to him.

His fingers shut on hers.

"Thank you, Amy. It was like you."

"And, besides, there's something else I want to tell you," she added gravely; "something that goes back into last winter and lasted all the spring. I didn't understand things then; things, nor you. I was hurt, and cross, and tired, and I took it very badly. I know you better now, know you by way of Day and, a little bit, by watching Ronald. I know now it all came out of your sense of honour, came because you thought we might misunderstand."

"Amy," steadily he looked her in the eyes; "have I been acting like an utter cad?"

"Never!" Her accent left no room for doubt. "You did the only honest thing you could have done. Be-

sides," a smile broke through her gravity, and a faint pink flush arose across her cheeks; "if you hadn't acted as you did, Jack, the — the other part of it might not have been."

Jack's hand tightened over her fingers.

"Amy," he said; "you're rather broad." And then quite inconsequently he added, "And be sure you hand on my remarks to Leslie."

CHAPTER TWENTY - ONE

“**R**OB, we’re beginning to grow up,” Day said to him a little sadly, the next morning.

“You don’t say!” Rob gazed at his tall sister quizzically. “Now, if you’d asked my opinion earlier, Day, I’d have told you we had already made quite a start at it.”

“Some of us have.” Again there came the little ring of sadness in the tone.

This time, it caught Rob’s ear.

“What’s the row, Aurora?”

“No row,” she told him. “I only hate the growing up. I suppose I’ve had too good a time as a girl.”

“Where do you feel it most poignantly?” Rob queried, for he had no mind to allow the unwonted sadness to linger in Day’s voice.

“Everywhere, this morning. I keep seeing things I’ll have to say good bye to, this next week.”

“You’ll come back,” Rob reassured her.

But Day shook her head.

“It never will be quite the same,” she answered gloomily, for she had as yet to learn that college life holds nothing better in its gift than the right to return, an hilarious and irresponsible alumna, to be welcomed and made much of by the later classes.

Some part of this fact must have penetrated the senior brain of Rob, however, for he made cheery reply, —

“ Lots better, though. When you come back, you’ll have all the fun and none of the fuss.”

“ But it’s the fuss I like,” Day said, a little contradictorily. “ That’s part.”

Rob laughed.

“ How do you know, Day? You’ve never hurt yourself with too much study? ” Then his tone changed. “ Day, you are tired,” he challenged her.

“ Not so tired, Rob; only a little blue at leaving things, and the girls. Besides, the changes have begun already. As I say, we’re growing up.”

“ What makes you think so? ”

“ I was talking with Amy, late last night,” Day said, with apparent inconsequence. “ She came over here to spend the night with Sidney and me.”

Rob’s face cleared.

“ Oh,” he said; “ methinks I have the clue to your fit of oversoul.” But his next words betrayed the fact that he did not understand it in the very least, for he added, “ If I were in your place, Day, I’d shut myself up, this morning, and take a good, long nap, before the hosts arrive. Jack and I will meet the family, this afternoon. Really, you must rest up a little for to-night.”

No sign there was, that night, however, that Day Argyle needed rest, as, amid the other fairies of *Titania’s* train, she came tripping out across the Athenian

woodland. Lightly, gracefully she danced forward among the mossy mounds, her lithe young body swaying gently in time to the lilt of the elfish theme that met her from across the footlights. So intent was she upon her part, that most thankless, useful part of all, the sinking of her entire identity in the artistic good of the common whole, that she had the scantest possible realization of the audience who faced her, a kindly audience, but grown critical from much living on the best of things, and of that fragment of the audience composed of her own especial group of friends. Just once she lifted her eyes, eyes from which all hint of sadness had been burned away by the spark of excitement, to the front corner of the balcony where she knew their places had been held. They were all there, she knew; but, out of all the eager rows of faces turned upon the stage, two only caught her eye, Rob's, Jack Blanchard's, both intently watching, waiting to catch her glance and answer it. Under her make-up, her cheeks glowed, and her eyes brightened until she looked, as indeed she felt, the happiest of fairies possible.

The theatre was crammed from the stage to the very doors. The open exits leading to the fire escapes were half blocked with girls, front rank of a solid line that reached down to the street below. Knots of white-wanded ushers sat on the steps of the steeper aisles, and a standing row of belated alumnae, still in travelling frocks and hats, fringed the more daintily clad audience in the seats before them.

All day long, the throngs of adoring relatives and loyal

friends had poured into the lazy old valley town, throngs from Boston and New York and from all the western cities. Distance seemed to be no barrier, nor age, nor yet extreme remoteness of connection with the graduating class. To all appearing, everybody came who could get an invitation, and some few others who could not. Every in-coming train shed its crowd. The station was a shrieking bedlam of sound: strident shouts and whistles, banging trunks, profane porters, and, above all and in all, the unbroken hum of greetings and of anxious queries concerning missing luggage.

Into this chaos, the private car *Aurora* had come sliding to its destined side track, that Saturday afternoon, to be promptly boarded by Jack Blanchard.

"Day is tired, and resting for to-night," he explained to Mrs. Argyle. "I told her I'd come and look out for you, in her place. Rob and Sidney are on the way," he added, to a quartette of waiting Stayres. "How goes it, Amy? Ready for the fray?" And he gave his hand to a dainty, fluffy little blonde who stood at Mr. Argyle's side.

She laughed up into his face, with every showing of cordial liking.

"Didn't I tell you I'd be home in time? I landed, yesterday morning, rushed my trunks through the custom house, and here I am."

"I thought you'd make it. Day is delighted at your caring enough to try. Her one wail has been over the chance of losing you," Jack told her with a perfect truth, for Amy Browne had been Day Argyle's earliest

friend, her close friend from the days of their christening parties onward.

"Of course, I was coming. It would have spoiled all manner of traditions, if I hadn't. Are all the Quebec crowd here?"

"All but mother. Day asked her; but she couldn't well come over. Wade and Irene came up, yesterday, you know."

"And Paul?"

"Here, this morning."

Amy's face grew very impish.

"And Lady Wadhams?" she inquired over her shoulder, just as Mr. Argyle called her to a waiting carriage.

And then Rob and Sidney swept down upon them, and coherent talk of any sort was at an end.

That night, by careful planning, one little corner of the balcony had been set apart that they might sit all together: the Stayres and Argyles and the Leslie, with Amy Pope's nineteen collateral relatives sandwiched in among them. Amy Browne sat with Jack, that evening; and, in the aisle seat where she could come and go at pleasure, Sidney had kept a place for herself, with Rob beside her. In the rear of the balcony sat the Winthrops, Irene and her husband; and, at the topmost pinnacle of all, Phyllis, with Lord Axmuthy in close attendance, watched the play intently, rejoicing, the while, in her kinship to the senior president which made it possible for her, a freshman, to be present on this greatest night of all.

It was a great night, too. Even the most jaded of the critics admitted it, while they watched the performance move onward to its smooth, artistic close, while they studied the setting of the stage, as skilful and by far more dainty and lavish of detail than that arranged by professional hands. Even the comic interlude, so easily turned to mere buffoonery, left them with the contented sense of humour born of true comedy, not farce. And, at the final coming of the fairies, tripping down the broad steps of *Titania's* house, the applause died away into the breathless silence which carries in its hush the most eloquent of praise.

The hush lasted through *Oberon's* song, lasted while the fairies, dancing, wavering, turning, tripped away up the stairway and vanished in the dimming distance. Then, if possible, it deepened, while the lights grew low and lower, until the stage was all in heavy darkness. save for the one electric beam which lay full on the face of *Puck*; and *Puck*, in thin, sweet voice, strangely remote and unearthly, spoke the little apologetic epilogue, down to its closing lines, —

“ So, good night unto you all.
Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin will restore amends.”

The voice died away, and, with it, the single beam of light. For a hushed moment, the theatre lay in utter darkness. Then the lights flared up again, and, with the lights, there came applause, a volley of enthusiastic cheering which lifted up one's gooseflesh and set the lights to

dancing. The girl actors had scored an entire success; they had held their crowded audience to the very finish, held them and thrilled them. The class had added yet another laurel to their crown. The play was done and over; but not the afterpiece.

That started, as it always does on those Saturday nights of dramatics, from a little group of girls huddled into the front seats close beside the orchestra. From there it was caught up into the boxes, and thence passed outward to the expectant throng now packed about the upper levels of the fire escapes, a voice or two at first, then a chorus of girl voices, rising to a shout, distinct, clearly spaced and rhythmic.

“ We — want — Janet — Leslie! ”

At the first sound of the well-known phrase, the applause ended, cut off sharply by the expectation of the audience who sat there, waiting to see the outcome of the great tradition of the college year.

There was a little pause, the shortest possible delay. Then the cry rose again, louder, more insistent.

“ We — want — Janet — Leslie! ”

Then Janet came. Her brown eyes were blazing with the excited realization that upon her inconspicuous self had fallen the crowning honour of the cast, the first summons before the audience. She came on quietly, as if half dazed by the greatness of her unexpected triumph, walked a good third of the way across the stage before she seemed to take in her surroundings. Then, with a gay little nod to the sea of faces before her, she ran to the middle of the stage, turned a swift hand-

spring and then tossed a mocking little kiss up to the balcony where her group of friends sat watching. And, as the kiss left her lips, every other pair of student lips took up the refrain whose very crudity is hallowed by countless associations.

“There is a girl who’s known in all parts,
Her name is Janet Leslie, and she’s won our hearts.
Oh, we’d like to know a girl with more go,
And we’ll all stand by her till the end, oh!”

A veritable *Puck* until the end, Janet veiled her face with her two hands, and peeped out at them mockingly from between her fingers, while the verse shook the hot, dazzling air with its rhythmic beat. Then, with another caper, another nod, another kiss flung vaguely upward, Janet Leslie vanished to gloat in secret over her unlooked-for triumph.

Then, the chief star greeted and dismissed with frantic cheering, the fun went its way in good earnest, loud and long and hearty, while even the oldest graduates caught the spirit and lifted their voices into random approximations of the songs; while the outsiders, looking on, longing to sing and not quite daring to do it, drummed out the rhythm with fans and with opera glasses and with booted heels. One by one in order of their greatness, the actors were called out, the individuals of the cast, then even an occasional fairy or two. First one of these, Day Argyle found herself summoned to show herself and hailed with her freshman couplet.

“Here’s to Day Argyle!
You may know her by her smile.”

And, while she stood before the footlights, smiling and nodding gayly at the girls, Mrs. Argyle, in the balcony, was fanning herself in a species of nervous frenzy and doing her best to force her face into an expression indicative of the most impartial criticism.

Then *Titania* came, afterwards by reason of Day’s freshman presidency; and then all the fairies in a merry group. That over, there came a fresh access of insistence in the summons.

“We — want — Amy — Pope!”

There followed a long delay. As it chanced, Amy was unhooking *Puck* from a projecting nail in the scenery; but the audience, who could not be expected to be aware of this fact, grew impatient.

“We — want — Amy — Pope!”

Ronald Leslie began to fidget in his seat.

“We — want — Amy — Pope!”

The blood rushed up across Ronald’s face. People from across the balcony began to point their glasses at the handsome young giant, so obviously growing restless over the delay.

“We — want — Amy — Pope!”

“By Jove, I can’t stand this!” And Ronald, starting to his feet, edged swiftly towards the aisle.

At the aisle, however, he halted suddenly. Amy had just come on, laughing a little still over her futile efforts to free *Puck*, and wearing the same simple pink linen

frock she had put on, that morning, when she had sallied forth to meet the first of the nineteen collaterals. Nodding gayly at her friends close at her feet, she came forward with the same frank unconcern she might have shown at any of the rehearsals; but her unconcern vanished speedily, at sight and sound of the ovation that awaited her, a formless, chaotic mixture of clapping hands and waving wands and flapping feather boas, and little strident cries of rapturous salutation, which little by little lost itself behind the rising chorus, —

“Amy Po - ope! Amy Po - ope!
We are singing, praises ringing,
We shall never find your equal,
Amy Po - ope, here's to you!”

“Jove! They're singing *Boola*,” Rob Argyle sought to make muffled exclamation into Sidney's ear; but, to his extreme surprise, Sidney was not to be seen.

She had not vanished for long, however. No sooner had Amy left the stage, than the clamour rose anew, louder, far more eager, even, than it had been before.

“We — want — Sidney — Stayre!”

With the slightest possible delay, she came and stood before them, tall and slight and girlish in her thin white frock, yet with a touch, withal, of something akin to the dignity of a full-grown woman in her face and bearing. And, at her coming, instinctively and by no pre-conceived arrangement, every senior in the audience rose up to greet her, while the actors in the wings came

flocking forward, to join in the ovation to their president.

“Sidney Sta - ayre! Sidney Sta - ayre!
We are singing, praises ringing.”

This time, up in his corner of the balcony, Rob Argyle was singing with full-throated vehemence this unexpected adaptation of the favourite old war cry of his university rival.

“We shall never find your equal,
Sidney Sta - ayre, here's to you!”

Nervously Sidney's hands shut hard upon each other, and her breath came short. She stood there motionless, however, steadying herself as best she might against the storm of applause, and trying in vain to realize that it was all for her, for just herself, Sidney Stayre. But, all the time she stood there, her gray eyes, albeit a little misty, never wavered from their resting place upon the true blue eyes of Rob Argyle.

Later, and limping a good deal more than usual by reason of the reaction from his extreme excitement, Rob sought Sidney in the wings. Boyishly, almost shyly, he held out his hand to her.

“After all, though, there's not much left for me to say,” he told her.

Her smile was still a little tremulous.

“Wasn't it astounding, Rob?” she asked him. “I can't understand it in the least.”

He looked at her steadily, for just a minute. Then, —
“I can,” he said briefly.

Around them, the chaos was increasing fast with every instant. Theatre attendants in dingy drilling, actors with opera capes huddled on above their costumes, seniors in brave array, white-gowned, white-wanded junior ushers, and adoring friends by scores and hundreds were crowding to and fro, jostling, pushing, calling to one another in every form of greeting, congratulation, information and of merry nonsense. In such a human maelstrom, it was wellnigh useless to seek for any individual, and Sidney knew it. None the less, —

“ Shall we try to hunt up Day? ” she asked.

“ I told Jack to look out for her,” Rob answered.

“ Then shall we go? ” Sidney questioned. “ This will be getting worse, every minute. Unless you care to see it out, that is.”

Smiling, Rob shook his head in silence, for the babel which surrounded them made words of but little use.

“ I think you’d best take my arm, till we get outside,” he added, while he illustrated his meaning by taking her hand and sliding it inside his elbow. “ This way? Come along, then.” And cautiously he began edging his way towards the nearest door.

At the door, however, a surprise awaited him. To his masculine eyes, it seemed that the entire college was lined up in the street, waiting to acclaim the actors as they appeared. Sidney’s advent was the signal for a fresh ovation.

“ Sidney Sta - ayre! Sidney Sta - ayre! ”

they warbled in a frantic chorus whose tuneful quality was fast losing itself in extreme hoarseness.

“ We are singing, praises ringing,
We shall never find your equal.”

“ You bet not, Sidney! ” Rob echoed, *sotto voce*. “ I’m beginning to understand what it is to be truly famous.”

But Sidney had forgotten herself and her fame in the nearer, more practical issue.

“ Look out for the step, Rob! ” she besought him. “ We can’t have you spraining yourself and getting laid up just now.” And then, the steps passed by in safety, she freed her hand from his arm and waved it to her cheering friends, just as the last hoarse, hilarious note died away, —

“ Sidney Sta - ayre, here’s to you! ”

And then, with Rob Argyle beside her, she passed swiftly through the crowd and turned out from among them, along her destined way. The cheering followed her, however; but, to the stalwart Harvard senior limping along at her side, it seemed that all the great ovation had given no such clue to Sidney’s character as had her little thoughtful care for him, just when, by good rights, her whole attention might have been engrossed by the applause showered down upon her from hundreds of enthusiastic college girls.

Half way up the little hill, Rob halted, breaking in upon their leisurely pace, breaking, too, their desultory

conversation. Turning about, he looked back upon the parti-coloured crowd, now streaming away in all directions.

"Sidney, it has been a great old night," he told her, and his voice was full of deep content.

"You felt it, too?" She spoke with quick enthusiasm. "The class has left a record for itself for all time."

"Class be hanged!" he answered. "I was thinking about the way they have been cheering you."

In the light of a street lamp close at hand, her eyes met his eyes with a look of amused shame.

"Rob, should you despise me for all time to come," she asked him frankly; "if I confessed to you — just you, you know — that I never was more surprised and — well, delighted in my life?"

"Being human, you couldn't well help it, Sidney," he told her coolly. "However, I doubt if you cared for it one half as much as I did."

"I —" she was beginning; but he cut her short.

"Sidney," he said, as, turning to face forward, he once more moved onward at her side; "I did enjoy it, enjoy it whole lots. And now there's something else I want to say to you, something I've been waiting until to-night to say. It's not especially romantic, I suppose, for a fellow to start out, making love to the girl who has been his best chum for years. But, Sidney —"

"Yes, Rob?"

However, no question was in Sidney Stayre's mind, as she spoke.

CHAPTER TWENTY - TWO

“**I** THINK I was never so happy in all my life,” Day said, after Rob had told them, the next night. Sidney smiled.

“What do you think of me?” she queried.

“Oh, yes, of course,” Day answered. “Only I have been so afraid it wouldn’t really happen.”

Sidney, enveloped in her loosened hair, spun about to face Day in righteous indignation.

“How could anybody help loving Rob?” she demanded. “Or did you think he wasn’t going to love me?”

Day laughed, while she shook her head.

“It was perfectly evident that he was, Sidney. My only fear has been that you’d both of you get too much into the loving habit, while it was too soon to have it do you any good.”

“What do you mean?”

But Day refused to explain herself.

After a little silence, Sidney spoke again, slowly, thoughtfully.

“Day, if you only knew just what it all is!”

“But I do,” Day said serenely. “I have eyes, and I have watched the two of you beam and beam and beam, all day long.”

"But I don't mean that way," Sidney persisted. "I mean for yourself."

Again Day shook her head. Her voice, when she answered, was perfectly matter-of-fact, betraying neither wounded sentiment, nor any envy.

"No use, Sidney. I am cut out for single blessedness. I'll be an adorable maiden aunt, though, and darn all your family stockings, when I come to visit you." Then, dismissing her matter-of-factness, she rose from her seat on the edge of the bed, and cast herself on Sidney's neck. "I am so happy, Sidney, so glad for you and Rob, that I believe my life can't hold another bit of enjoyment."

Nevertheless, it could.

This little talk had taken place on Sunday night. The girls had gone early to their room, glad to make the most of the too-short rest which intervenes between dramatics on the one hand and the more serious business of commencement on the other. Save for the inevitable excitement of the baccalaureate sermon, they had spent the day quite quietly, for the most part talking idly with their assembled families at one end of the Tyler House veranda. Just once had the morning's quiet been disturbed, however. That had been when Mr. Argyle had taken advantage of a momentary pause to announce the surprise he had been holding in store: that he had included Sidney Stayre in making up his plans for their European summer.

"My ancestors were thrifty Scotsmen, and I take after them," he said nonchalantly, at the finish of his tidings.

"It seemed to me rather a pity to waste a whole room on Day, through all the trip, when Sidney might as well be on hand to save it."

And, in the clamour of rejoicing that came after, no one had any time to note the little smile that passed between Sidney Stayre and Rob Argyle.

It had been agreed between them that their news, their great surprise of all, should be withheld until the evening when, baccalaureate over, and vespers, they all would once more be together, this time in the great upstairs room where Day and Sidney were finishing their college days. The result showed the wisdom of their plan. No decorum, born of a more public place, could ever have held down the chorus of delighted congratulation when Rob, simply, but in a man-like fashion, told his good news, and then, turning to Mr. Stayre, made formal demand for Sidney's hand.

"You might as well, you know," he argued gravely, at the finish of his more formal phrase. "She's given me her heart, you know, and her hand won't be any good to you, without it."

And so it came to pass that, the next morning, Sidney Stayre, leading the ivy procession of her class, seemed to herself to be walking forward in a beautiful dream in which the happenings of a joyous girlhood were inextricably tangled into one wellnigh perfect whole, a whole whose absolute perfection found itself in the one great consummating fact of the day before. Above her head, the June sun came slanting down, to turn the air to shimmering gold, to gild great patches of the

open lawns about her, to cast upon her glowing face its softer beams, sifted of their gaudiness by the fluttering elm leaves overhead. Behind her came the great line of girls, two and two, two and two, all white-gowned, each one carrying by way of staff a single long-stemmed rose, type of the true American beauty, not alone of face and form, but of sweetness as well, and strength, and of perfect, symmetrical maturity: a long, long line of loyal, enthusiastic girls whose wish it had been that she should walk before them, all that year, their chosen chief and leader. And beside her, on the little hill which overlooked their starting, stood a tall, yellow-haired young giant whose honest, happy blue eyes, sweeping up the long, long line, were blind to every face but one, and that one hers. And so it was that, smiling a little, a little dreamy-eyed, yet very tall and quiet, with the long line winding away behind her, guarded on either side by the trailing ropes of laurel borne on the shoulders of the junior ushers: so it was that Sidney Stayre moved slowly forward along the canvas-covered pathway leading out across the campus, leading, too, out of her merry college girlhood, out and out to the still greater happiness of the womanhood awaiting her.

That night, a spirit of revelry appeared to have broken out upon the campus. From end to end of the great enclosure, each walk was bordered with its double row of swinging paper lanterns; trees were converted into blazing bunches of lights, while, from the windows of the houses dotted here and there amid the lawns,

electric lamps shone down in long, slanting beams across the softer lights below.

Out from the open windows of the Students' Building, far at the rear of the campus, there came the lazy lilt of an orchestra and the soft hum of voices, showing that a few staid souls were inside the building, dutifully paying court to president and faculty, after the time-honoured custom of parents and the sedater sort of friends. All the rest of the world seemed gathered on the campus, which was dotted thickly over with swirling, rushing bits of crowd that fell apart into separate groups, then packed themselves together into a solid mass, only to fall apart again and go drifting aimlessly about until, often at the remotest corner of the campus, some sudden burst of singing, some new formation of the wavering lights and vivid gowns, sent the whole mass swarming thither in all haste. Seniors, locked arm in arm, pranced and sang and marched and ran. Staid members of returning classes, clad in fantastic costumes, green and yellow, violet or brilliant scarlet, marched and counter-marched about the campus, swinging their lanterns and singing to whatever class they chanced to meet; then, years and dignity alike forgotten, joined hands in a long line and went dashing away among the buildings in a mad chase for other worlds to conquer. Scarlet gowns and mortarboards rubbed against huge violet hats with little electric lamps by way of trimming. Green opera capes fluttered in the night breeze, turning their wearers to the likeness of a bevy of lunar moths; and, amid all the vivid costumes, the pale summer frocks of the un-

costumed seniors stood out in strong relief. Meanwhile, lurking in the shadows of shrubbery and trees, the more formal evening costumes of the guests furnished the note of vigorous contrast which merely set off the brilliancy of all the rest of this academic carnival. For carnival it was, its actors all more or less beside themselves with the real Smith spirit which seizes on one, now and then, potent to make one quite forget the years and changes, and revel in the sheer consciousness of being at least one little, little part of the great college whole, loyal to all the past, trustful for all the future.

The fun was at its height when Day Argyle, dropping from her place in the front rank of singing, dancing seniors, fell in with Jack Blanchard.

"Where now?" he asked her, with a smile, for, all that evening, at Rob's side, he had been watching the senior antics from afar; all that evening, quite as Rob had done, watching, he had seen but the one eager, girlish face in all the throng before him.

"Trying to get just one little bit of breath, before I go at it again," she gasped. "I think I must be growing fat and lazy. Where are you bound?"

"I was just trying to see if I could find Janet anywhere," he answered. "I —"

But, without waiting for the finish of his phrase, Day caught him by the arm.

"Quick!" she said. "This way, and as fast as you can. Run!"

Laughing, flushed, breathless, her pale hair loosened about her face, and her elaborate frock, fit for a duchess,

kilted about her like any washerwoman, Day led the way up the main drive which cuts the campus, with Jack, dutiful, but somewhat mystified, following at her heels. Once she turned her head to look back at him gayly, mockingly.

"The front lawn, by the President's steps," she said.
"Can you keep up?"

From far across the campus, there still came random bits of song.

"Just *the* college.
Just the college we sing to,
Just *the* college,
You're just *the* college for us."

And again, —

"And gladly singing to you always,
Our loyal hearts with joy shall fill.
Oh, fairest, fairest Alma Mater,
You hold and claim us still."

Then, all at once, the bits of song had died away, and the hundreds of moving lights had rushed forward from all directions to converge upon the central walk which runs straight from the president's house down to the Students' Building in the rear. There, crowded and huddled together as they best might be, scarlet gown and green cape and uncostumed senior, they bordered the long straight path in two thick lines, a loyal, loving guard of honour, awaiting the slim, venerable figure they all loved so well. Smiling and bowing, pleased as a boy by this sudden, impromptu ovation in his honour,

he came slowly forward, escorted by a squad of violet-hatted alumnae, while the waiting crowd greeted him with cheers and songs and swaying lanterns, stood to greet him as he passed onward, then fell in behind him, while the quiet of the summer night was torn across and across with the couplet so dear to the heart of every loyal graduate who has known the one wise ruler who has made the college what it is.

At the little cross-walk, leading up to the presidential steps, the throng halted and packed itself more closely for a final repetition of their song. It died away to silence.

“Good night,” the President said; and then, in a hush more loyal even than the singing, his escort stepped aside, to leave him to pass on alone up through an arch of swaying paper lanterns held on high by scores of girlish hands.

At the foot of the steps, he turned.

“Good night,” he said again, and, this time, the deep voice broke a very little.

There came the answering cry, but not too clearly, —
“Good night! Good night!”

And then the silence dropped and lasted, until the shutting behind him of the heavy door.

From their places close at the foot of the steps, Jack and Day watched the scene to its end, watched the great throng melt away, silent, perchance a little moved. Then impulsively Day turned to Jack, her brown eyes glowing hotly, although their long lashes were still moist.

"It's a perfect ending," she said, with a slow, happy sigh. "Jack, college has been one of the four best things of all my life."

"What are the others?" he queried lightly, for as yet he had no notion whither her next words were going to lead.

They led far.

"The four?" she echoed, with a smile. "You want to know? Well, the being born, and the having Rob for brother, and now college —" She hesitated, then stuck fast, and, even in the fitful light of the dangling, swaying lanterns, Jack could see a sudden scarlet tide roll up across her cheeks.

"That's only three," he reminded her, as they turned to walk away together. "What's the other?"

"The having you about," she added, with a brave effort for the careless unconcern she had been maintaining, for many and many a long month.

His breath came short, caught, came short again.

"You really mean it, Day?" he asked her swiftly.

Her voice dropped to a murmur.

"Yes, Jack, I do." Then she pulled herself together, and pointed off across the campus to a distant bit of lawn where a white-gowned girl was dancing in the thickest of the revel. "Look, Jack! There's Janet now," she told him.

But Jack was once more master of himself; master, too, of some one else.

"Day, do you suppose I care about a dozen Janets, when I can stay with you?" he asked her.

Then, with an air of complete possession, he took her hand and drew it within the protecting curve of his strong arm.

"It is for always, Day," he told her gently; "always and always. It's the one thing for which I have been waiting and working, all these years."

And then, straight through the middle of the merry, mocking bands of revellers, under the swaying, swinging paper lanterns, wrapped in the new, grave dignity of their outspoken love, Jack Blanchard and Day Argyle went on together.

Child-time had ended for them all. Maturity had come.

THE END.

“ You gave us dreams, unnumbered,
And life we had not known,
And now, oh Alma Mater,
We give you back your own,
For memories, for friendships
That bless each parting day,
And toil unsought we render,
And debt unasked we pay. ”

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